~THE STRONGEST BRIDE ON EARTH~

SUMOMOMOMOMO

6

SHINOBU OHTAKA

The strongest bride on earth.
Sumomomo Momomo.6
Shinobu Ohtaka

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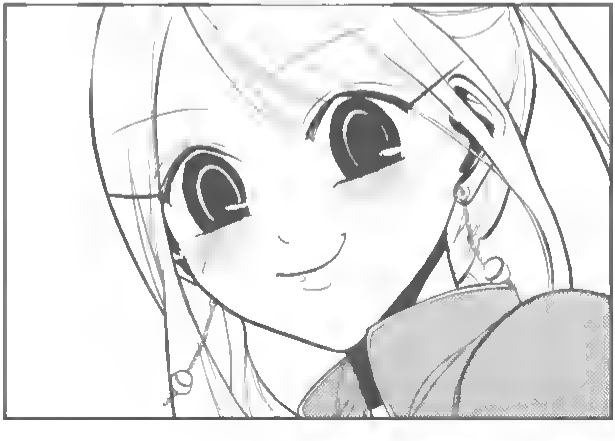
SUMOMOMO,MOMOMO

39. BEFORE THE STORM

...AN UNFORGIVABLE CRIME!!
AS A WOMAN, YOU HAVE COMMITTED...
SA (SWISH)
OOH, SCARY!
DON'T YELL AT LITTLE OLD ME.
WE ALL KNOW IT'S IROHA-CHAN YOU'RE REALLY MAD AT.
ISN'T THAT RIGHT?
...WHAT?
I MEAN, YOU ARE, AREN'T YOU?

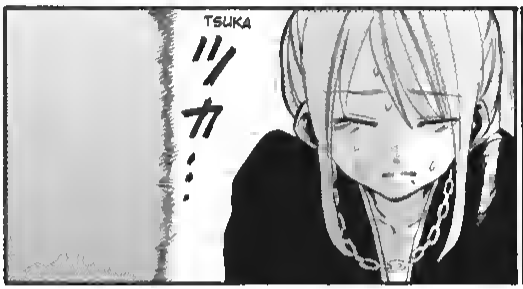
.....
I'M RIGHT, AREN'T I?
YOU COULDN'T FORGIVE HER FOR TAKING YOUR MAN, COULD YOU?
...TO BE IN LOVE WITH THE SAME PERSON, DO YOU?
YOU DON'T WANT ...
YOU CAN'T HIDE IT FROM ME.
YOUR ANGER IS PROOF THAT YOU'RE WORRIED.
BUT YOU LET IT HURT YOU SO MUCH INSIDE!
THIS IS SO STUPID! IT'S JUST LOVE AND HATE, THAT'S ALL!
...TO PICK ON GIRLS!!!
THIS IS WHAT MAKES IT SO FUN...
TSUKA (TROMP)
TSUKA
BASHIIN (SMAAACK)



...TREATING A WOMAN'S HEART WITH SUCH SCORN !!
THAT IS ENOUGH OUT OF YOU...

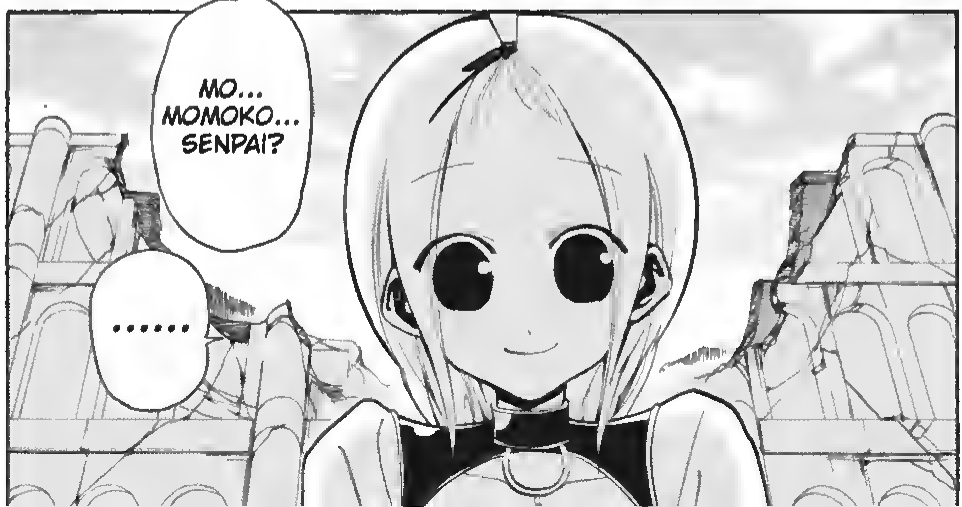
YOU CLAIM IT IS "FUN" TO PICK ON GIRLS!?
YOU KNOW THAT ISN'T TRUE!!
IF YOU UNDER-STAND THE PAIN OF YEARNING FOR ANOTHER ...
...THEN YOUR HEART MUST BE BURNING WITH THE SAME PAIN.
BE-CAUSE YOU ARE...
...A GIRL AS WELL.

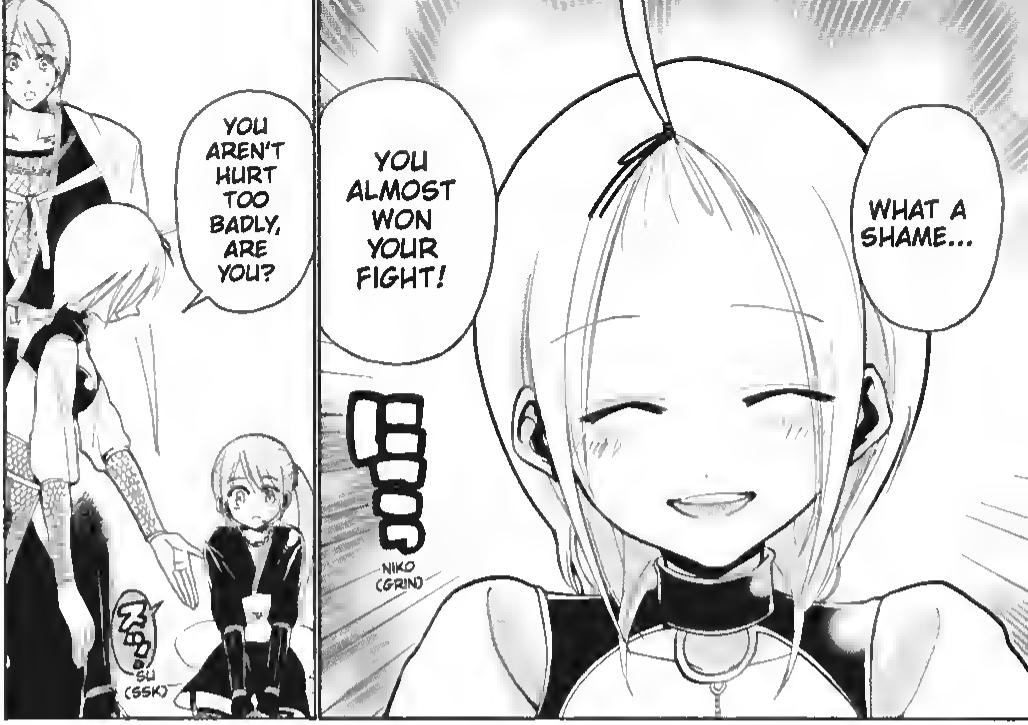
BIKU (TWITCH)
KURU (SPIN)

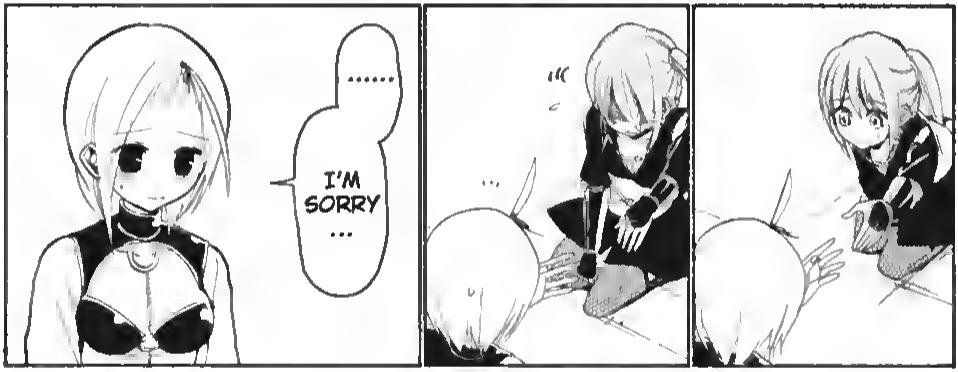

TSUKA

TSUKA (TROMP)
TSUKA

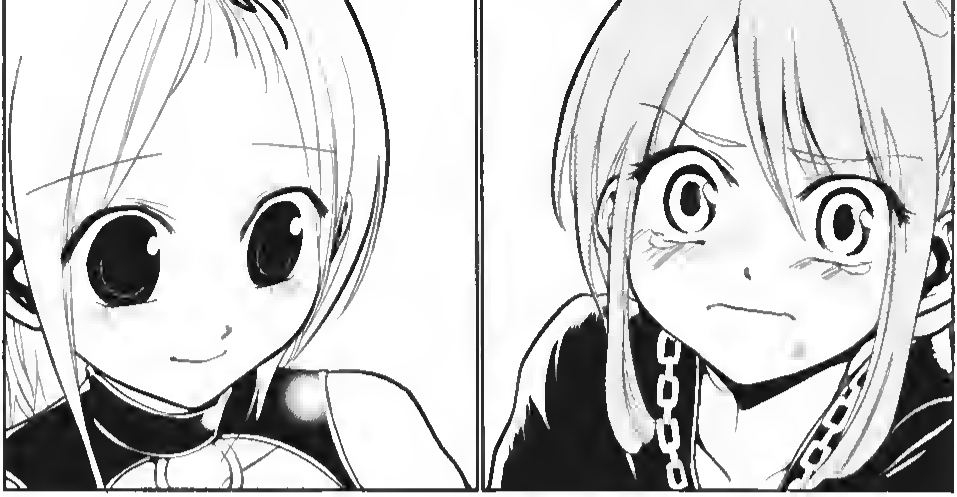
SOOOO (SLOW)


MO... MOMOKO... SENPAI?
.....


YOU AREN'T HURT TOO BADLY, ARE YOU?
SU (SSK)
YOU ALMOST WON YOUR FIGHT!
NIKO (GRIN)
WHAT A SHAME...


.....
I'M SORRY ...
...

NO, NO! IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT!
BUN BUN (SHAKE)
BUN
!
GASP!
...AND MY REACTION HURT YOUR FEELINGS ...
I WASN'T STRONG ENOUGH TO CONTROL MY SURPRISE...



IT'S FINE...
NO, IT'S ALL RIGHT.
BUT I...!!
.....
AND HERE I AM, RUINING EVERY-THING... I'M SO SORRY!
YOU'RE PRACTI-CALLY MARRIED ALREADY!
BUT, I MEAN!

...WE ARE NOT MAN AND WIFE.
...BE-CAUSE...
IN FACT...

...KOUSHI-DONO...
...HAS NEVER TOLD ME THAT HE LOVES ME.
HE HAS NEVER SAID THAT I AM HIS WIFE.
NOT EVEN ONCE.
.....
...WAITA MINUTE...!!
...IS MY SILLY, ONE-SIDED CRUSH.
THERE IS NO REASON FOR YOU TO HOLD BACK ON ACCOUNT OF ME!
ALL IT IS...
NIKO (GRIN)

C-COMPETITION?
OF COURSE.
...SYMPATHY IS HERETICAL.
IN FACT, WHEN IT COMES TO TRUE COMPETITION...
...AND SHE WAS ACTUALLY TAKING IT THAT WAY ON THE INSIDE?
THE WHOLE TIME SHE WAS JUST SMILING AWAY...
A-A COMPETITION FOR LOVE!?
INDEED!
...FOR THE LOVE...
...OF A SINGLE GENTLEMAN!
YOU SEE...
...THIS IS A BATTLE BETWEEN TWO WOMEN...
A BATTLE FOR SURVIVAL IN WHICH ONE'S LIFE IS EVER ON THE LINE!
A WAR OF LOVE IS TRULY A FIGHT TO THE DEATH.
THE WISE WORDS OF MY BENEVOLENT FATHER.
"IT IS BETTER TO RISK YOUR LIFE FOR A SINGLE WOMAN THAN TO DEFEAT A THOUSAND BEARS."
LOVE... NO HUMAN SOUL CAN HELP BUT REACH OUT TOWARD ITS GREAT BRILLIANCE WHEN LOVE PRESENTS ITSELF...

AND I SHALL BEGIN!!
SALLY FORTH!!
BA (WHOOSH)
ばっ!!
AHH, I SEE!
WE MUST WEIGH AND COMPARE THE STRENGTH OF OUR LOVE FOR KOUSHI-DONO!
BUT HOW...?
THIS IS THE TIME FOR BATTLE! WE MUST DETER-MINE...
NOW COME!
L-LIFE—?
COMPROMISE OF ANY SORT IS SURE TO BE LIFE-THREATENING!
BA (ZIP)
...WHO IS WORTHY OF HIS LOVE!

ANGYAAA (RAAHH)
MY RAGING LOVE FOR KOUSHI-DONO...
...IS AS THE SKY DRAGON THAT STRIDES ACROSS THE HEAVENS!!!

NNGH!
OH...OH YEAH?
IT'S GOOD
HIS SIMPLE SMILE CAST IN MY DIRECTION IS AKIN TO THE FEELING OF ASCEND-ING TO HEAVEN!
GYUN (ZOOM)
I WOULD LEAP ACROSS ONE THOUSAND LEAGUES TO KOUSHI-DONO'S SIDE IN A SINGLE INSTANT!

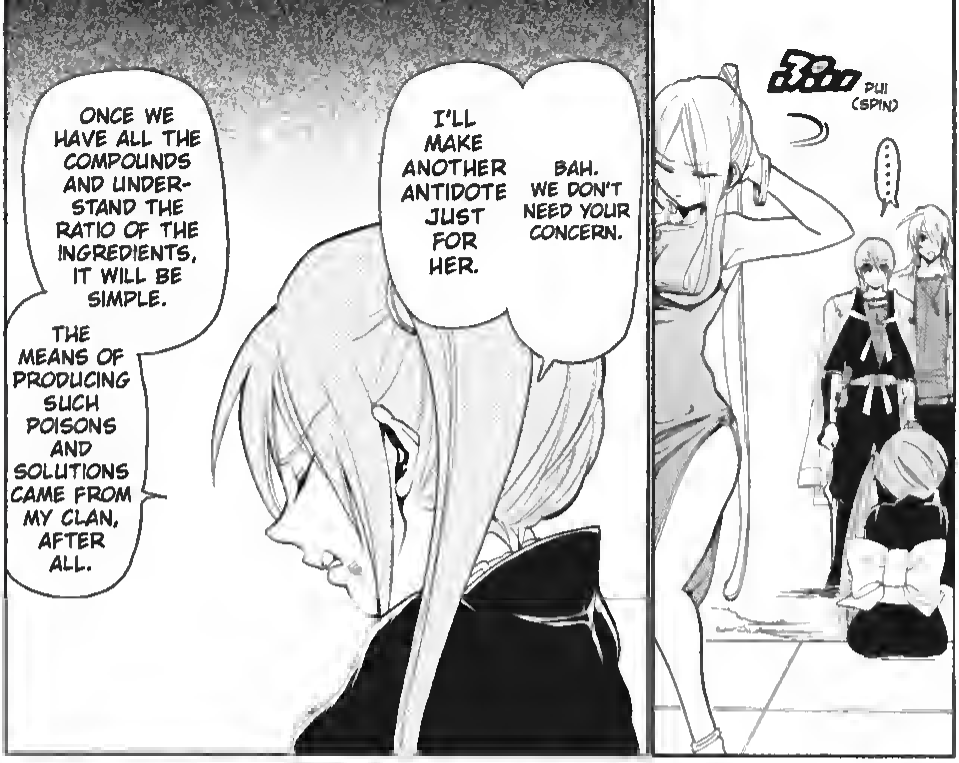
WELL, MY LOVE FOR KOUSHI-SENPAI...
...IS LIKE THE GREAT, BLAZING SALAMANDER!!
SHAAA (HISS)
WHEN HE PUSHED ME ONTO THE BED...
...AND WHISPERED HIS LOVE INTO MY EAR, MY HEART NEARLY EXPLODED!
AAAAAGH!!
DAMAGE
ZUBUU (STAB)
K-KOUSHI-DONO!?
WHEN DID YOU DO THAAAT?
UMM, KOUSHI-KUUUN!!?
NODOOO
WHAT EXACTLY IS SHE TALKING ABOUT!?
NO, HANZOU! YOU STOP THAT RIGHT NOW!

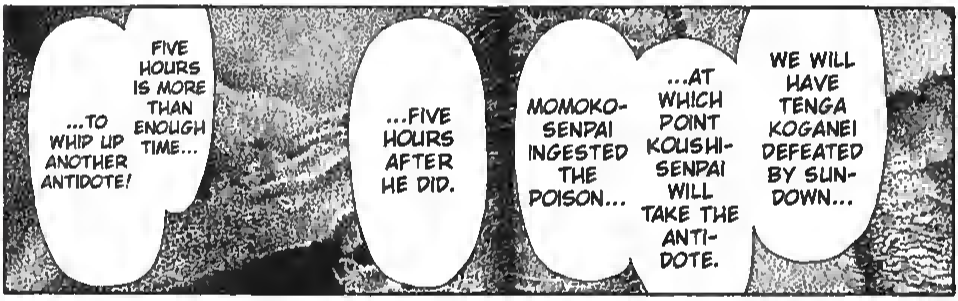
I COULD NEVER ACT THE WAY THEY DO.

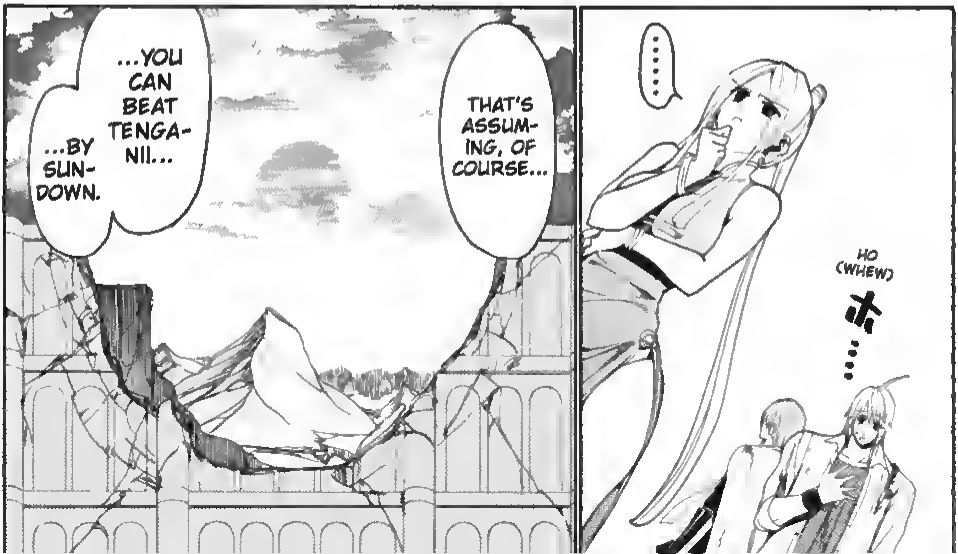
I DON'T HAVE ANY TROUBLE SPEAKING LIES, BUT WHEN IT COMES TO TRUE FEELINGS...
CERTAINLY, I CAN TELL JOKES LIKE ANYONE ELSE.

...I FELT HAPPY WHEN YOU UNDER-STOOD ME.
THAT'S WHY, DEEP DOWN INSIDE...

WAS IT A GOOD IDEA...
...TO LET MOMOKO AND INUZUKA GO AHEAD BY THEMSELVES...?
IT'S NOT MY PROBLEM.
THEY WERE THE ONLY TWO TENGA-NII WANTED TO SEE.
I'M MORE WORRIED... ABOUT *THE TWO OF THEM* BEING POISONED.
THERE WAS ONLY...
...A SINGLE DOSE OF ANTIDOTE PREPARED FOR THE BOY.
.....
!
ARE YOU SAYING YOU HANDED OVER THE THIRD COMPOUND BECAUSE YOU WERE WORRIED FOR HER SAKE?
OF COURSE NOT.
IT JUST SEEMED POINTLESS TO FIGHT ANY LONGER.
I COULD SEE THE MARKS ...
...ON THE DRAGON GIRL'S WRIST...


ONCE WE HAVE ALL THE COMPOUNDS AND UNDERSTAND THE RATIO OF THE INGREDIENTS, IT WILL BE SIMPLE.
THE MEANS OF PRODUCING SUCH POISONS AND SOLUTIONS CAME FROM MY CLAN, AFTER ALL.
I'LL MAKE ANOTHER ANTIDOTE JUST FOR HER.
BAH. WE DON'T NEED YOUR CONCERN.
PUI (SPIN)


...TO WHIP UP ANOTHER ANTIDOTE!
FIVE HOURS IS MORE THAN ENOUGH TIME...
...FIVE HOURS AFTER HE DID.
MOMOKO-SENPAI INGESTED THE POISON...
...AT WHICH POINT KOUSHI-SENPAI WILL TAKE THE ANTIDOTE.
WE WILL HAVE TENGA KOGANEI DEFEATED BY SUNDOWN...

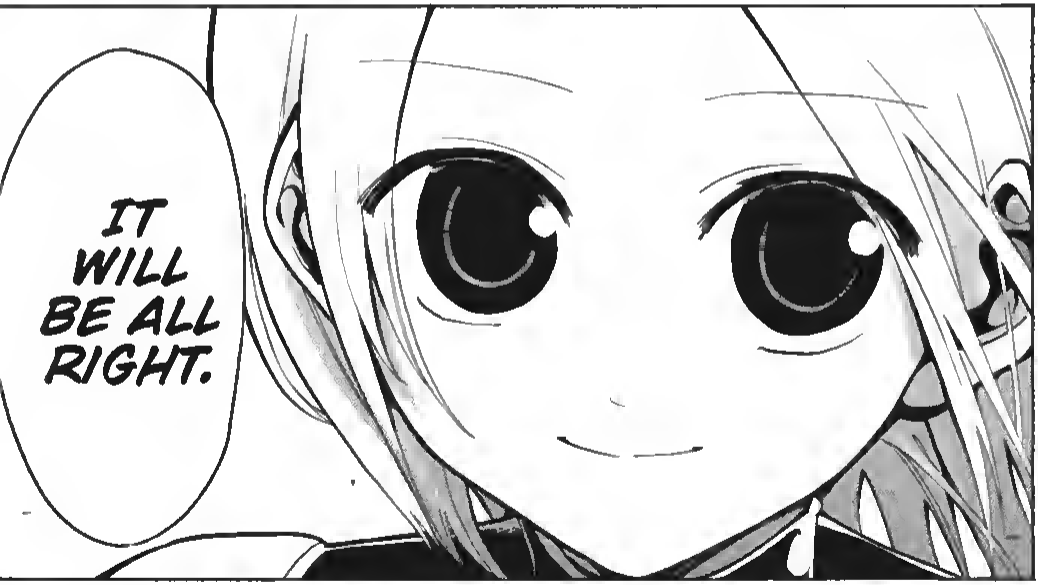

...BY SUNDOWN.
...YOU CAN BEAT TENGANII...
THAT'S ASSUMING, OF COURSE...
HO (WHEW)

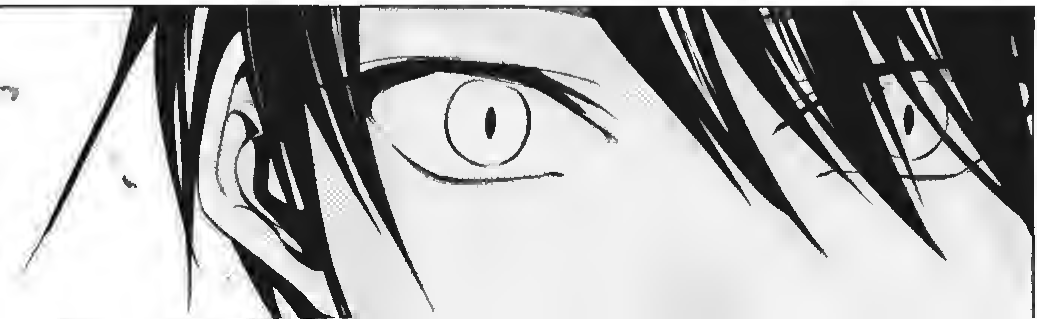
UH...
NO, NOT REALLY.
SO...
...DOES YOUR BODY ACHE WITH THE POISON?

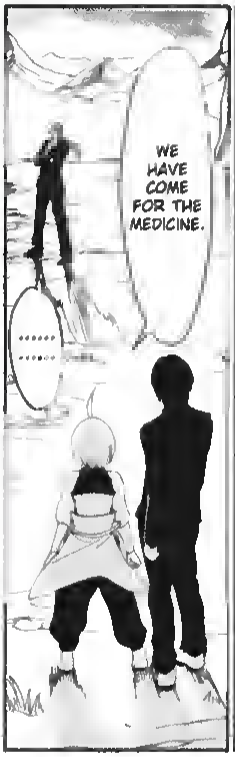
I DIDN'T REALIZE ...
..YOU REFERRED TO HER SO FONDLY...
RO-HA CHAN.
ALL THANKS TO IROHA-CHAN, I GUESS.
IF ANYTHING, I ONLY FEEL A LITTLE BIT SLUGGISH ...
. YOU KNOW .
. FROM THE SUP-PRES-SANT.

!?
KUKU (GIGGLE)
クスクス
KUKU
THIS IS NICE.
ORO (FIDGET)
ORO
PU (PFFT)
I HAVE BEEN YEARNING ...
...FOR THIS.
F-FOR WHAT?
A DAY...
...WHEN, FOR THE SAKE OF OUR LOVED ONES...
...WE PRAY...
WHEN WE WAVER ...
... PANIC ...
... STRIVE ...

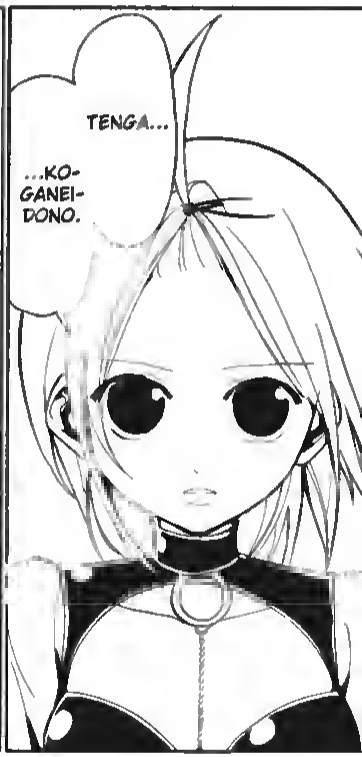
...IN A PEACEFUL TOMOR-ROW!
...THAT WE MAY SMILE TO OUR HEARTS' CONTENT ...
...TO THAT KIND OF LIFE.
SOON WE WILL RETURN ...


IT WILL BE ALL RIGHT.




WE HAVE COME FOR THE MEDICINE.
.....
.....

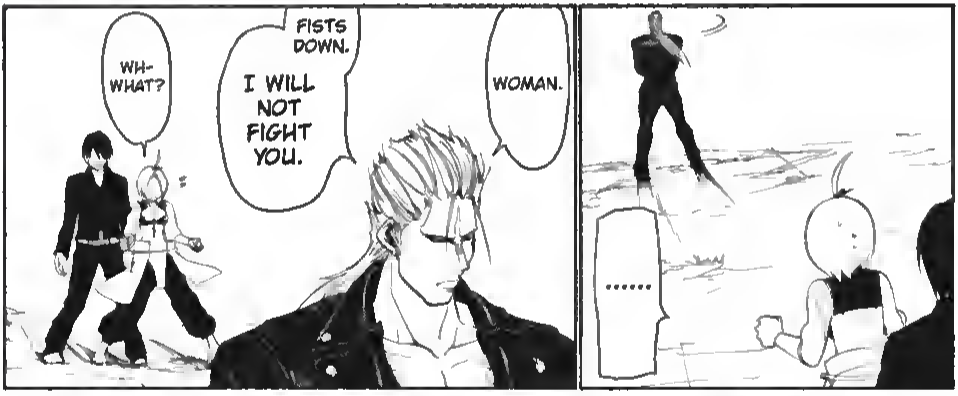
DRAGON WOMAN.
.....

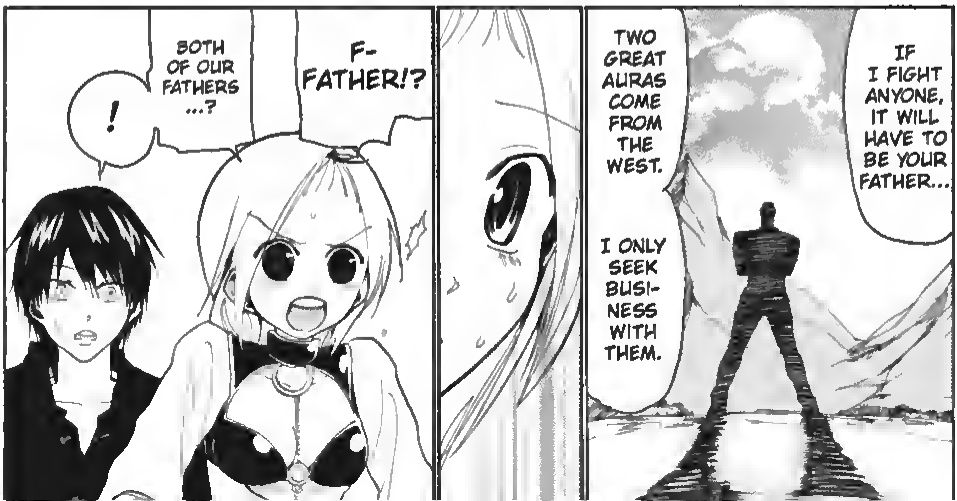

TENGA...
...KO-GANEI-DONO.

BUT EVEN STILL, THEY ARE FAMILY.
...OF THEIR RECK-LESS BEHAV-IOR.
I CONFESS I GROW TIRED...
MY SISTER'S WORK, I PRESUME.

SUCH A LOW METHOD.
POISON?

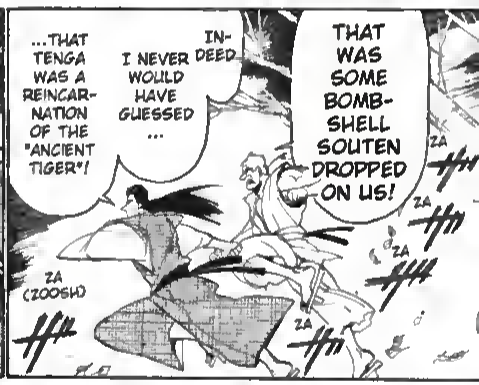
I AM SORRY.

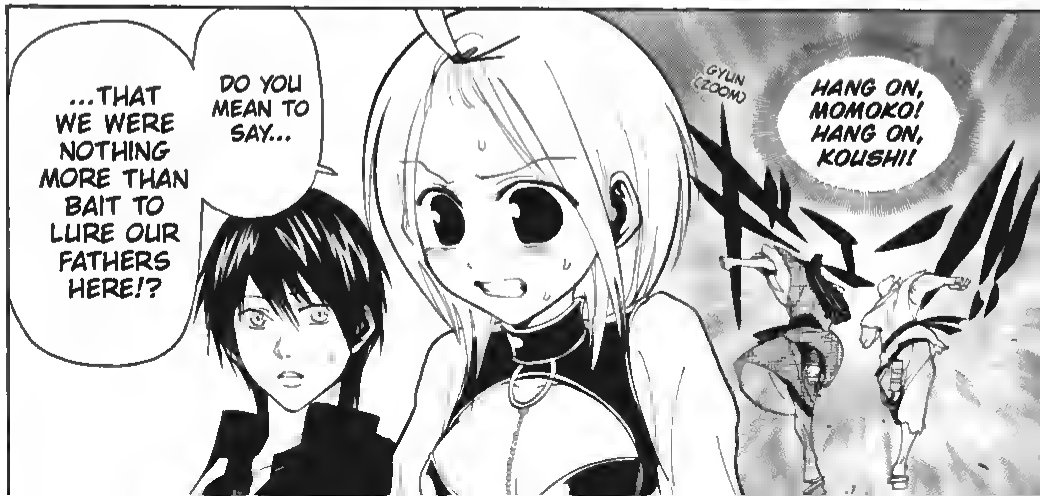

WH-WHAT?
FISTS DOWN.
I WILL NOT FIGHT YOU.
WOMAN.
.....

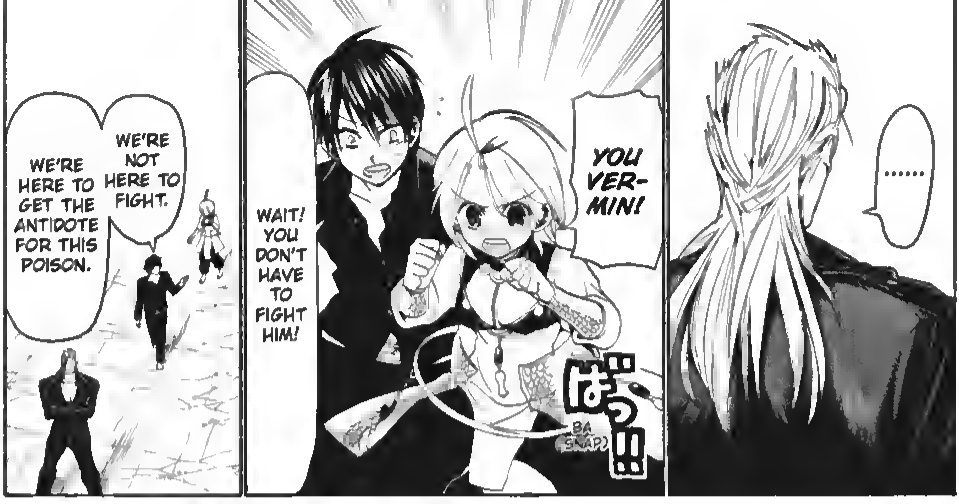

!
BOTH OF OUR FATHERS ...?
F-FATHER!?
TWO GREAT AURAS COME FROM THE WEST.
I ONLY SEEK BUSI-NESS WITH THEM.
IF I FIGHT ANYONE, IT WILL HAVE TO BE YOUR FATHER...

OUR DADS... ARE ON THE WAY HERE!?

...BY CHASING SOUTEN OUT OF THE POSITION!
... CONSPIRED BEHIND THE SCENES TO MAKE HIM HEAD OF THE CLAN ...
NOT ONLY THAT, BUT SOME-ONE...


...THAT TENGA WAS A REINCAR-NATION OF THE "ANCIENT TIGER"!
I NEVER WOULD HAVE GUESSED ...
IN-DEED
THAT WAS SOME BOMB-SHELL SOUTEN DROPPED ON US!
ZA (ZOOSH)
ZA
ZA
ZA


...THAT WE WERE NOTHING MORE THAN BAIT TO LURE OUR FATHERS HERE!?
DO YOU MEAN TO SAY...
(GYUN (ZOOM)
HANG ON, MOMOKO! HANG ON, KOUSHI!


.....
YOU VER-MIN!
WAIT! YOU DON'T HAVE TO FIGHT HIM!
ばっ!!
BA (SNAP)
WE'RE NOT HERE TO FIGHT.
WE'RE HERE TO GET THE ANTIDOTE FOR THIS POISON.

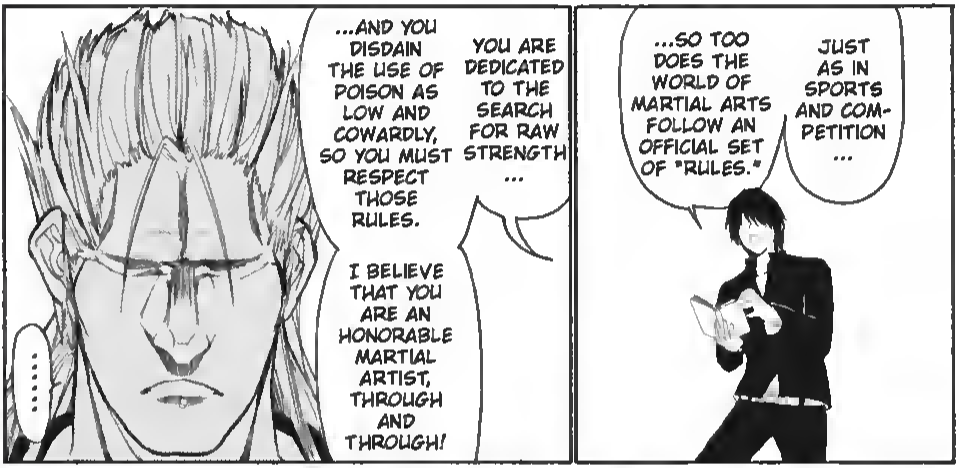
SADLY...
...I WAS FORCED TO TAKE THIS DEADLY POISON BY YOUR SISTER.
IF I DON'T HAVE THE MEDICINE BY SUN-DOWN, I WILL DIE.
ALL I WANT ...
...IS THE ANTIDOTE THAT YOU POSSESS.
.....
SINCE YOU'VE ALREADY APOLOGIZED FOR HER ACTIONS...
...I FEEL THAT YOU WILL OBLIGE MY RE-QUEST.
WHAT DO YOU SAY?

HE... SEEMS... TO BE LISTENING...
DID ANY OF THAT GET THROUGH TO HIM?
L-LOOK ...
...THE LAWS OF THE MARTIAL ARTS WORLD MIGHT BE RATHER VAGUE...
...BUT IF YOUR SISTER'S ACTIONS GOT OUT TO THE PUBLIC...
...WELL, THE REAL WORLD IS DIFFER-ENT.
THAT WAS A CRIME— ONE THAT CARRIES HEAVY PENALTIES!
SU (SH)

WILL THIS ARGUMENT STOP HIM IN HIS TRACKS, I WONDER?

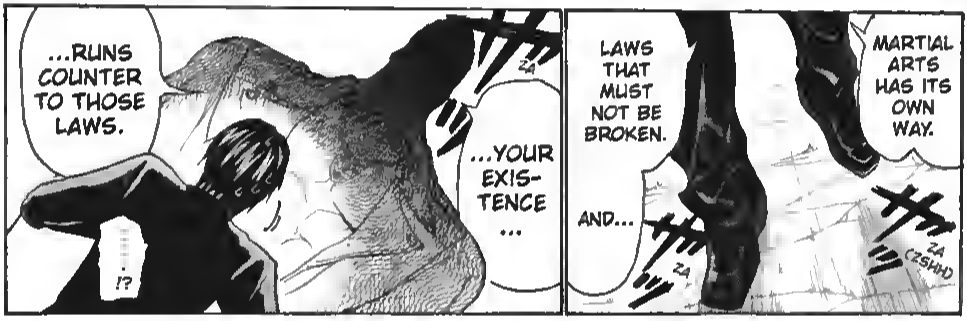
CHAPTER 39. BEFORE THE STORM – END

YOU KNOW WHAT I THINK?


.....
...AND YOU DISDAIN THE USE OF POISON AS LOW AND COWARDLY, SO YOU MUST RESPECT THOSE RULES.
I BELIEVE THAT YOU ARE AN HONORABLE MARTIAL ARTIST, THROUGH AND THROUGH!
YOU ARE DEDICATED TO THE SEARCH FOR RAW STRENGTH ...
...SO TOO DOES THE WORLD OF MARTIAL ARTS FOLLOW AN OFFICIAL SET OF "RULES."
JUST AS IN SPORTS AND COMPETITION ...

.....
.....!
...I WILL NOT...
.....?
IN OTHER WORDS, THE LAW ITSELF IS MY SET OF RULES!
BUT MY RULES ARE THOSE OF JAPANESE SOCIETY ...
AND AS LONG AS THE LAW FORBIDS THE ACT OF KILLING...
I ALSO VALUE THE RULES!

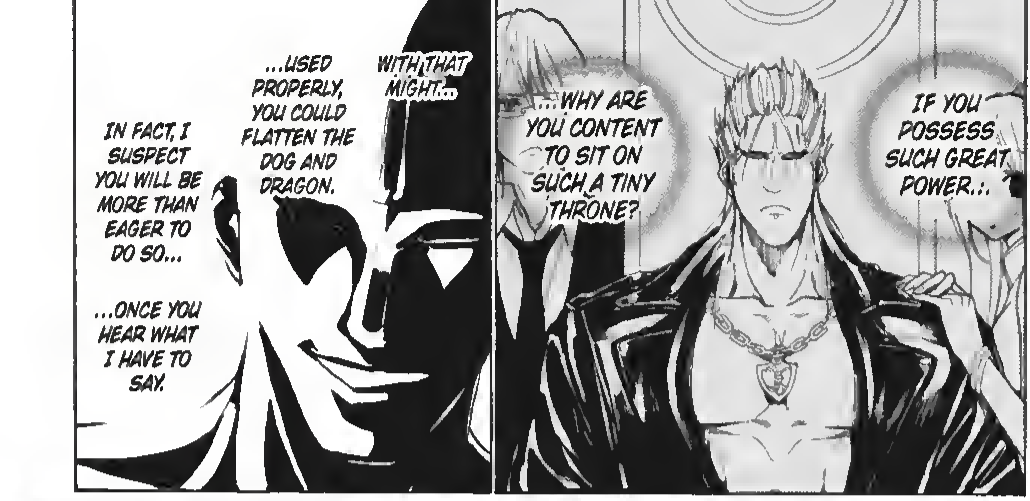
INDEED.
YOU HAVE A POINT.


MARTIAL ARTS HAS ITS OWN WAY.
ZA (CRSHH)
LAWS THAT MUST NOT BE BROKEN.
AND...
ZA
ZA
...YOUR EXIS-TENCE ...
...RUNS COUNTER TO THOSE LAWS.
!?

THERE-FORE...

40. REGRET IS NOT REDEMPTION
DOGOO (KABOOM)
...YOU MUST DIE!!

THEY STILL WON'T WIN.
YOUR FAMILY DOESN'T STAND A CHANCE!
...MOMOKO-SENPAI IS WAY STRONGER THAN US!
IN CASE YOU WEREN'T AWARE...
YES, THEY WILL!
NOT OVER TENGA-NII.
THEY WON'T WIN.
WH-
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
IN FACT, I'D GUESS THEY'RE LEARNING THAT LESSON RIGHT NOW.
TENREI!
YOU DON'T GET IT.
HE'S ON A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT LEVEL THAN THE REST OF US.
ZA (ZSHH)
I DON'T UNDER-STAND!
TENGA-SAN!
TENGA-NII...
...HAS A SPECIAL POWER... ONE THAT NOBODY ELSE IN THE KOGANEI CLAN HAS.


IF YOU POSSESS SUCH GREAT POWER...
...WHY ARE YOU CONTENT TO SIT ON SUCH A TINY THRONE?
WITH THAT MIGHT...
...USED PROPERLY, YOU COULD FLATTEN THE DOG AND DRAGON.
IN FACT, I SUSPECT YOU WILL BE MORE THAN EAGER TO DO SO...
...ONCE YOU HEAR WHAT I HAVE TO SAY.

WHY DO YOU HOLD THIS ENMITY FOR KOUSHI-DONO!?
WH...
THE TRUTH OF THE TWELVE HEAVENLY GENERALS!
ZUBO (THWUP)

W-WELL, I WON'T LET YOU HURT HIM!
!?
DA
BECAUSE ...
...HE IS KOUSHI INUZUKA.
(DASH)

GA
(GRAKK)

GO
(KRRUD)

RO
(THWAM)

I-I
WAS SO
NAIVE...
AHH...
ZOOO
(SHIVER)

KIIIIII (VWEEEE)
ZAAAA (ZSSHH)
ばっ
BA (ZIP)
GAH... I WON'T SURVIVE IN A BATTLE OF PHYSICAL BLOWS!
WHICH MEANS ...
HOW COULD I HAVE EVEN CONSIDERED TALKING THINGS OUT WITH THIS MONSTER!?
SECRET ART!
HAIRA ICHIDEN MUSOU-RYUU!
BLACK DRAGON MORNING DESTROYER !!!

GASHI
(GRAB)
MIKI
(CRAKK)
MIKI
MIKI
MIKI
GU
(GRIP)
JUUU
(PZZZZ)
JUUU

GUSHAA!! (SPLURCH)
...THE SAME ATTACK YOU USED BEFORE?
WAS THAT... .....
JUUU
ITS POWER HAS RISEN CONSIDERABLY...
THE ANCIENT MIGHT OF THE DRAGON CLAN IMPRESSES ME...
THIS "DRAGON ENERGY" ...
SHUUU (HISSS)

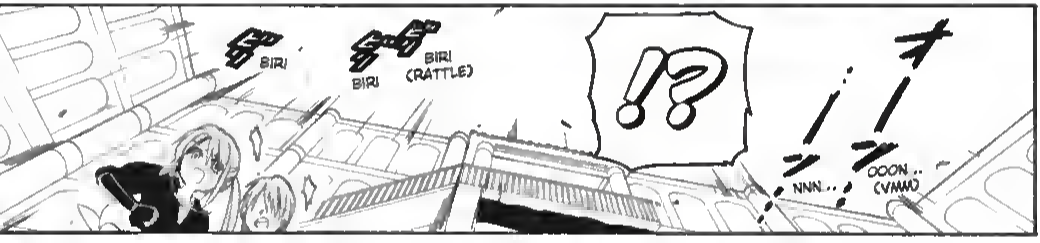
VERY ENTER-TAINING!
.....!?
...THE DOZEN WARRIOR-GODS SWORN TO PROTECT YAKUSHI NYORAI, THE BUDDHA OF MEDICINE.
THE ANCESTORS OF THE TWELVE HEAVENLY GENERALS WERE OUR VERY NAME-SAKES THEM-SELVES...
THESE CLANS MAINTAIN THE OLD WAYS AND HOLD THEIR ANCIENT POWERS TO THIS DAY.
HOWEVER, SOME CLANS LIMITED THEIR BREEDING AND KEPT THE BLOOD STRONG.
...DEVELOPING INTO MERE "MARTIAL ARTS," PALE SHADOWS OF WHAT THEY ONCE HAD BEEN.
...THEIR "SUPER-HUMAN" POWERS GREW OBSOLETE...
...THEIR NUMBERS SPREAD, BUT THEIR BLOOD WAS THINNED.
AS THEY CONSORTED WITH MORTAL HUMANS...
...TO MAKE MONEY WITHIN THE WORLD OF SPORTS.
THE KOGANEI CLAN USES ITS WEAK, IMITATION "MARTIAL ARTS"...
...AND THE KUZURYUU CLAN!
THE INUZUKA CLAN...

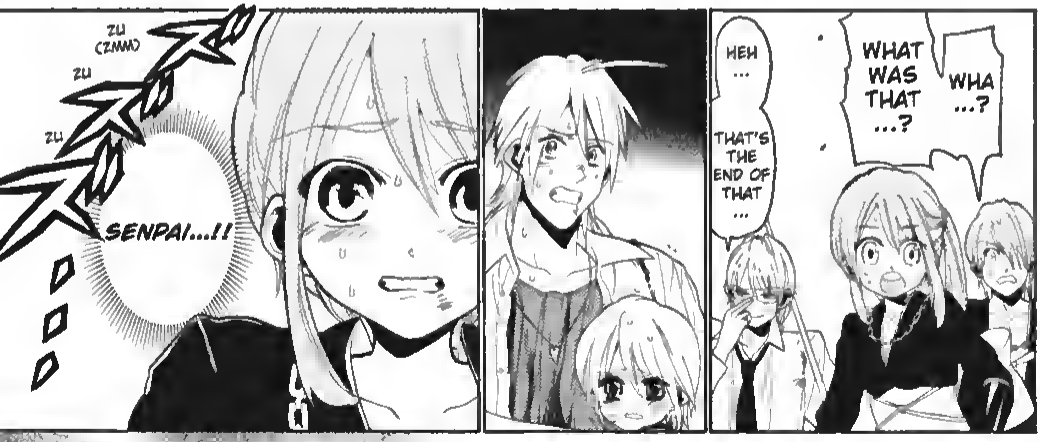
...HE CHOSE TO REVIVE OUR ANCESTRAL STRENGTH AND TAKE BACK THE POWER OF OUR GODLY DAYS.
SO INSTEAD ...
BUT TENGA-NII DESPISES THAT USE OF OUR TALENTS.
BOKO (THUMP)
SHUUU... (HSSS)
...THE FASTER AND MORE COMPLETELY HE IS HEALED.
THE MORE PHYSICAL DAMAGE HE SUFFERS...
BO (BOOM)
GYURURURU (GLRKK)
GICHICHI (GRRCH)
HIS BODY IS AUGMENTED WITH PREMIUM, SUPERHUMAN CELLS...
BO
BOGOO

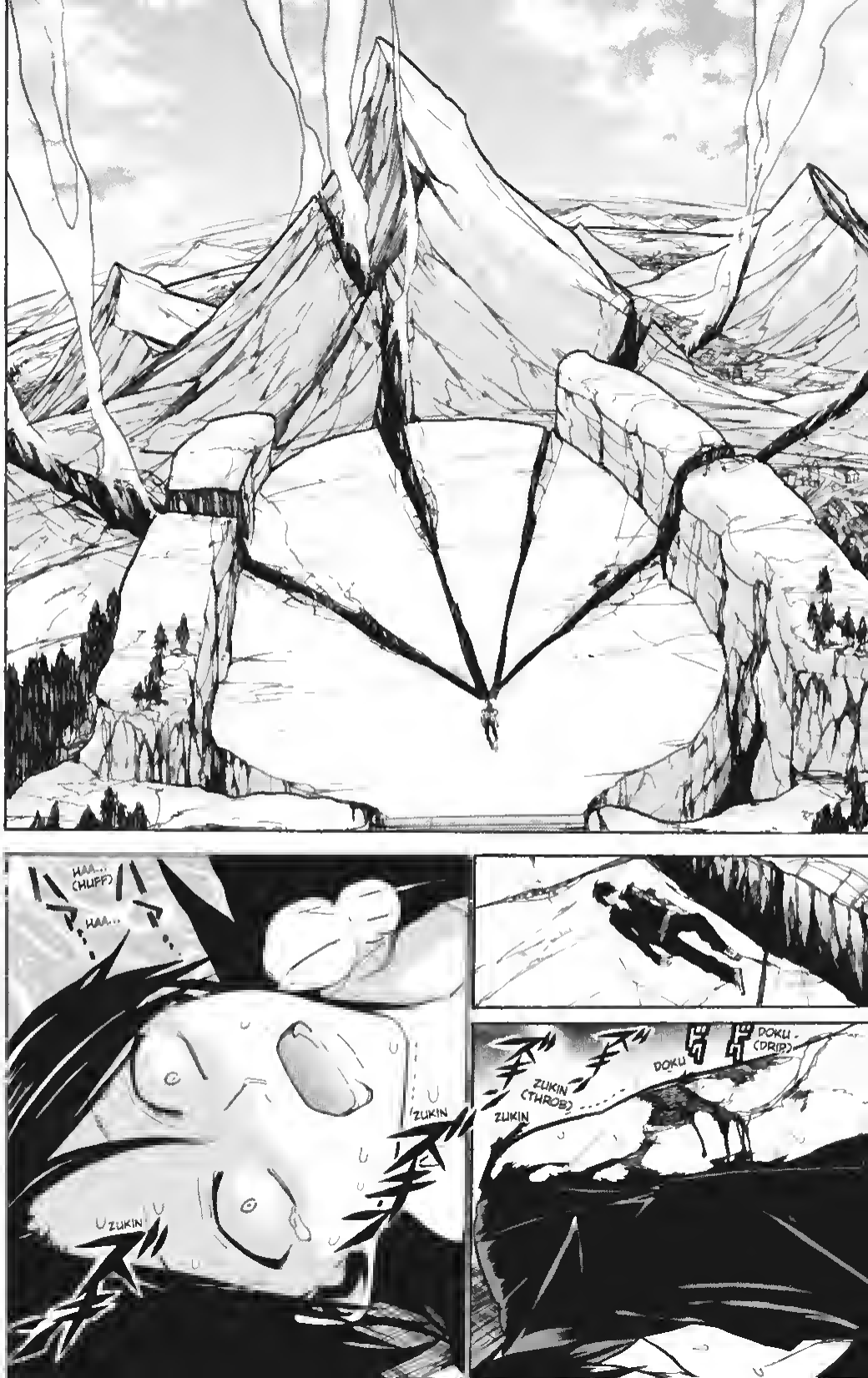
BUWAAA (FWOOM)
INFINITE FORTIFYING ARMOR OF THE TIGER!
GIRA (GLINT)
THE WOUNDS ARE GONE...
...AND HIS AURA IS TWICE AS STRONG!

!
HERE I COME.

A
(VWM)


BIRI
BIRI
BIRI
(RATTLE)
!?
NNN...
OOON..
(VMM)


ZU
(ZMM)
ZU
ZU
SENPAI...!!
HEH
...
THAT'S
THE
END OF
THAT
...
WHAT
WAS
THAT
...?
WHA
...?

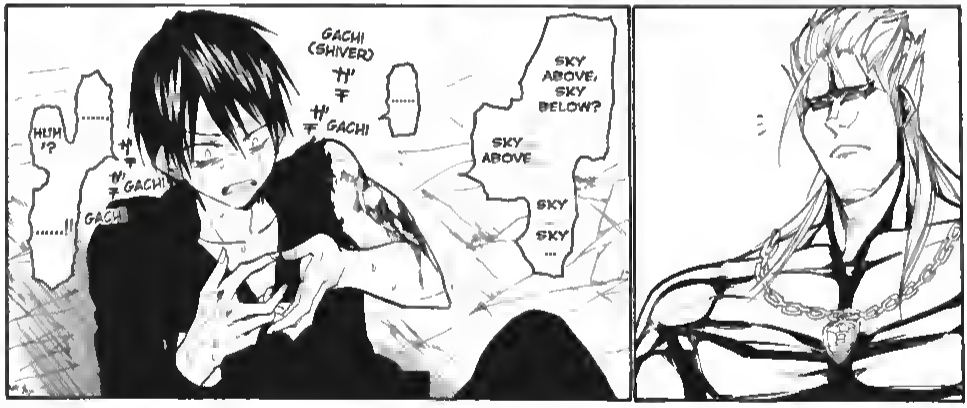

HAA... (HUFF)
HAA...
ZUKIN
ZUKIN
DOKU
DOKU - (DRIP)
ZUKIN (THROB)
ZUKIN

...SHE FOUND A WAY TO GET ME THROUGH IT!
WHENEVER SHE WAS THERE ...
ZUKIN
ズキン
...ALL I'VE DONE IS WATCH THE FIGHTING HAPPEN...
UP UNTIL NOW...
ZUKIN
ズキン
ZUKIN
ズキン
WHAT THE HELL...JUST HAPPENED ...!!?
RRRGH...
GAHHH...
NGH ...
I'M ...
...I'M BLEEDING ...
ZURU (SHLLP)
ZA (SKFF)
BIKU (JUMP)
.....
ZA
ZA
ZA

GOOOOOO (GRWWWW)
OH GOD, HE'S TERRIFYING !!!
WHAT'S THIS?
ARE YOU REALLY THE INUZUKA HEIR?
YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW TO DEFEND YOUR-SELF?

I ONLY GRAZED YOU AT BEST.
WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU?
YOU CAN'T DODGE, BLOCK, OR MUSTER A COUNTER?
BIKU (FLINCH)
ビク
GACHI ガチ
GACHI ガチ
GACHI (SHIVER)
...WHERE IS MOMO-KO!?
WHERE IS...
KYORO キョロ
KYORO キョロ
WH-
WHERE IS SHE?
KYORO (SPIN)
KYORO キョロ
?
...TOOK THE BLOW IN YOUR PLACE...
THAT WOMAN...
EEEP!
ZAN (SKFF)
I COULD REALLY USE SOME HELP RIGHT NOW ...!!

...AND DIED, YOU FOOL!
SHE SAVED YOUR LIFE...
...AND STILL YOU DO NOT FIGHT.

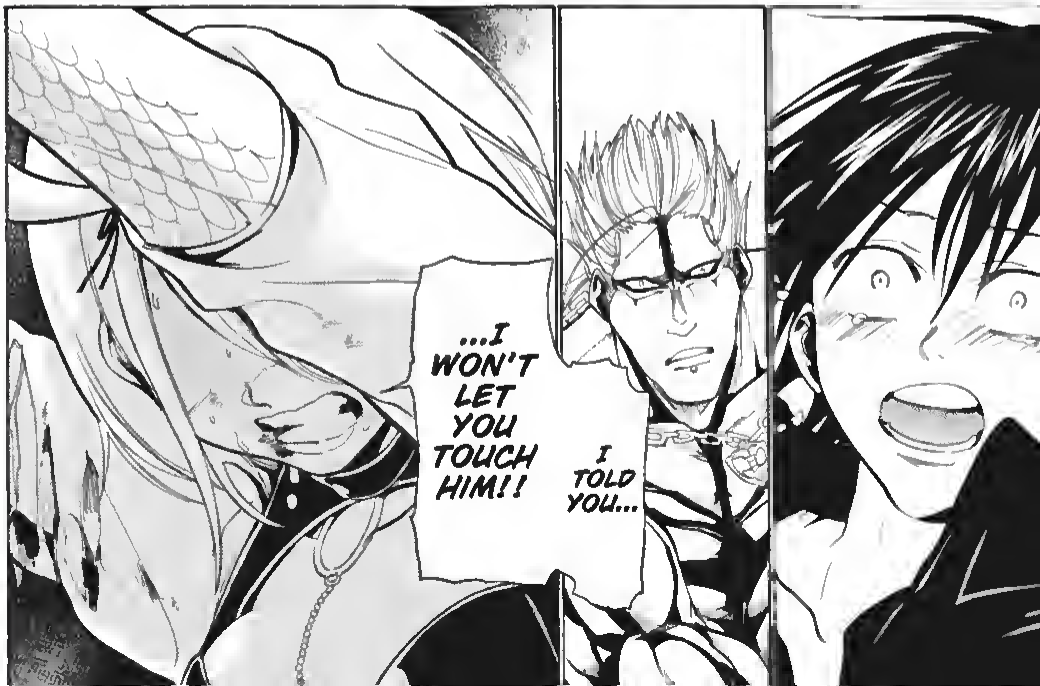

GACHI (SHIVER)
GACHI
GACHI
GACHI
GACH
HUH!?
.....!!
SKY ABOVE, SKY BELOW?
SKY ABOVE
SKY
SKY
...

I ALONE STAND ALMIGHTY !!

.. FUDOU SHINGAN-RYUU .
S-SECRET ART!!
SA-SARA
S-SASARA

AND WHAT... WAS THAT?
I DON'T UNDER-STAND...
WHY WOULD THAT POWERFUL DRAGON WOMAN DIE TO SAVE THIS MAN?
I'M SO SORRY!!
GUWA (VSSH)

GA
(KRAKK)
(DSHH)


...I WON'T LET YOU TOUCH HIM!!
I TOLD YOU...

MOMOKO!
...ARE YOU ALIVE?
HOW...
AHH, I SEE.
YOU CAN WEAR YOUR ENERGY ...
...ABOUT YOUR BODY, LIKE A NATURAL SUIT OF ARMOR.
THIS ONLY HEIGHTENS THE ANTICIPATION...
...OF THE FIGHT AGAINST YOUR FATHER!
GO (VWUMM)
YOU WON'T LAY...
...A SINGLE FINGER ...
...ON MY FATHER ...
...OR ON KOUSHI-DONO!
I'M SO GLA—

HAA
CHUFFD
HAA
MO...
MOMOKO!?
DO
(THUD)

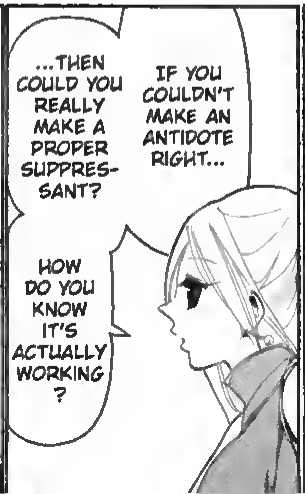
HUFF!
HUFF!
WHAT'S WRONG ...!?
MOMOKO...
MOMOKO!!

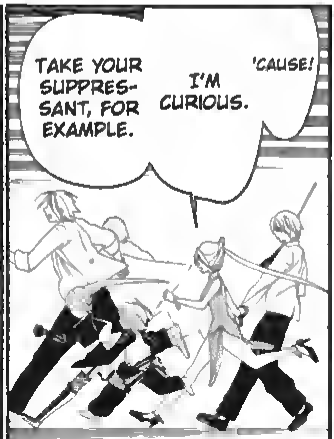
AND WHY THE HELL ARE YOU TAGGING ALONG!?
TA (TMP)

OF COURSE!
LET'S GO, HAN-ZOU! WE'RE GOING TO FIND THEM!

I CAN'T STAY HERE! I HAVE TO SEE!

HA!
WHAT A STUPID THING TO SAY.
YOU SAW KOUSHI-SENPAI ...
...AND MO-MOKO-SENPAI ...
...LOOKING PERFECTLY HEALTHY!


IF YOU COULDN'T MAKE AN ANTIDOTE RIGHT...
...THEN COULD YOU REALLY MAKE A PROPER SUPPRES-SANT?
HOW DO YOU KNOW IT'S ACTUALLY WORKING ?

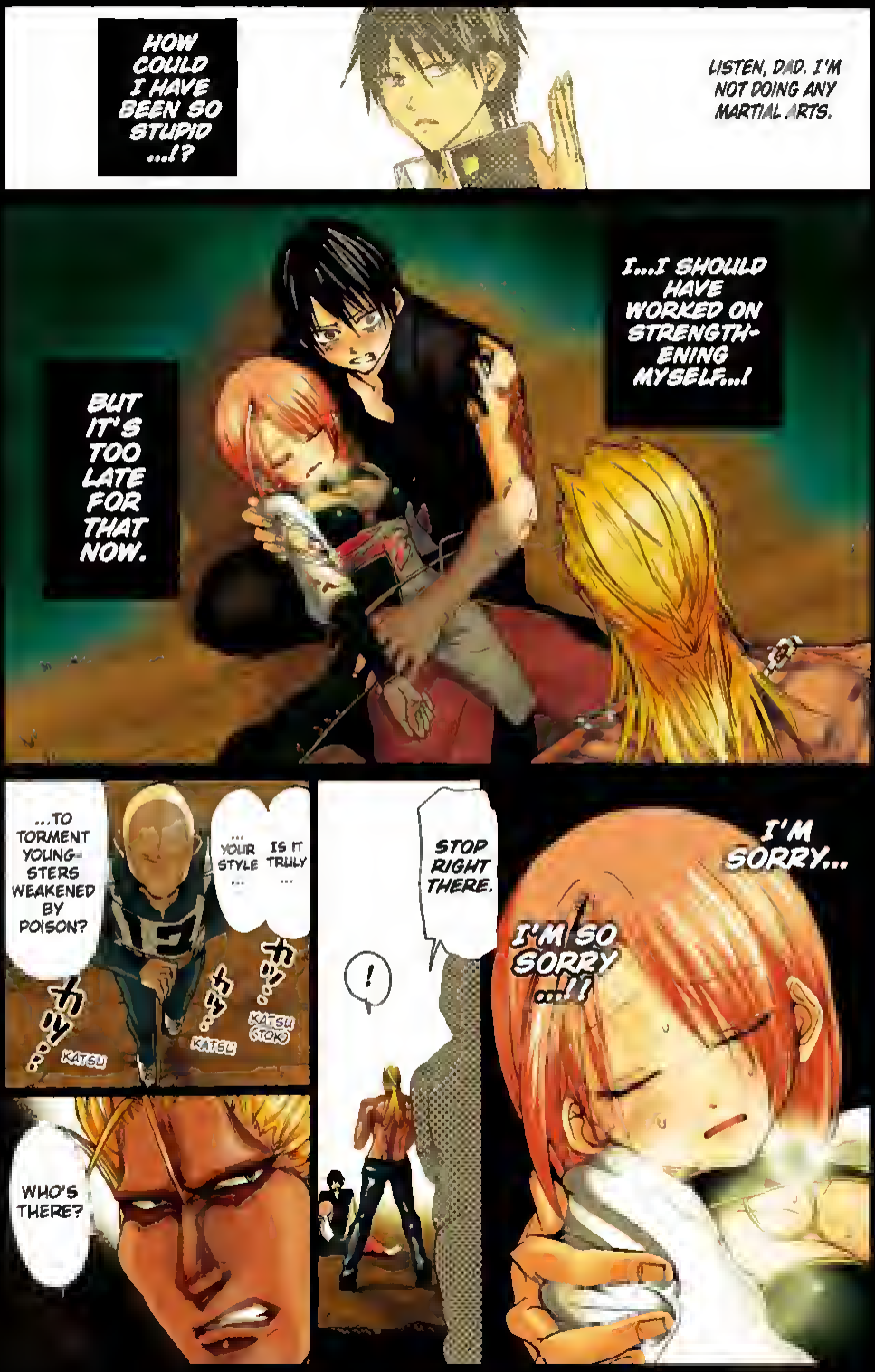

'CAUSE!
I'M CURIOUS.
TAKE YOUR SUPPRES-SANT, FOR EXAMPLE.

MOMOKO!!
MOMOKO...
THEY'RE JUST FINE!
SHIT ...!!
IT WAS THE BEST ONE COULD HAVE EXPECT-ED...
SHE MIGHT BE A DRAGON, BUT SHE'S ONLY A CHILD...
...AND A GIRL, AT THAT.
AS I FEARED...
...A SINGLE BLOW DID HER IN.
!
IS IT THE...?
OH NO...
HAA
HAA
.....
HAA CHUFF)
HAA

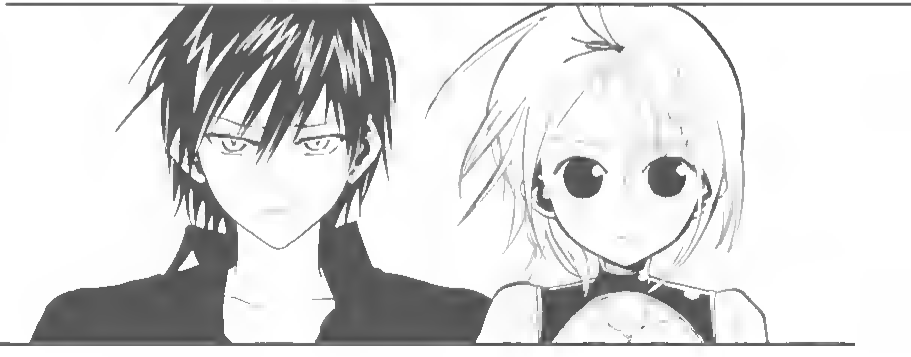
LOOK HOW FAR THE POISON HAS SPREAD!
IT MUST BE WEAKENING HER STAMINA...
BUWA (SEEP)
!!
SA (SPIN)
WHY IS SHE GETTING SICKER FASTER!?
BUT SHE TOOK THE POISON AFTER I DID.
DAD...
...ALL I CAN FEEL IS REGRET.
...I WILL PUT THE BOTH OF YOU...
...AT EASE FROM YOUR SUFFERING.
NOW...

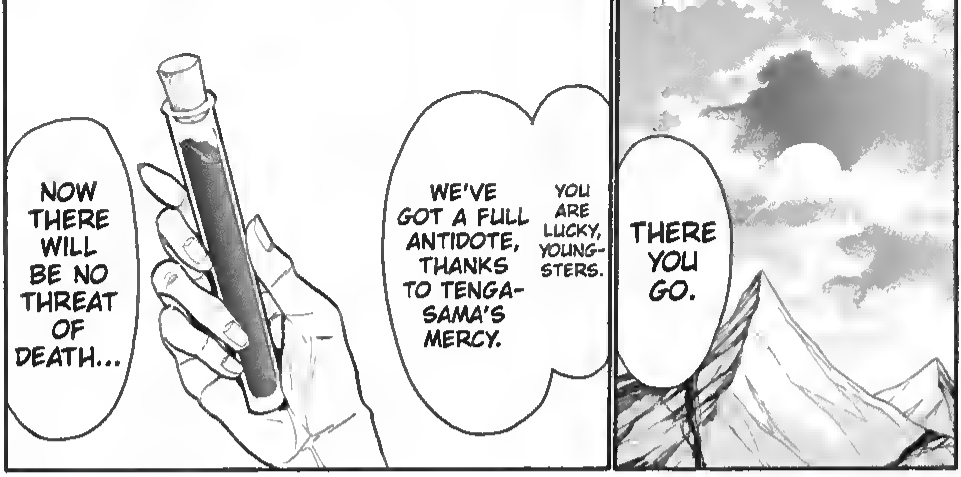
CHAPTER 40. REGRET IS NOT REDEMPTION – END

41. THE END OF A LIFE

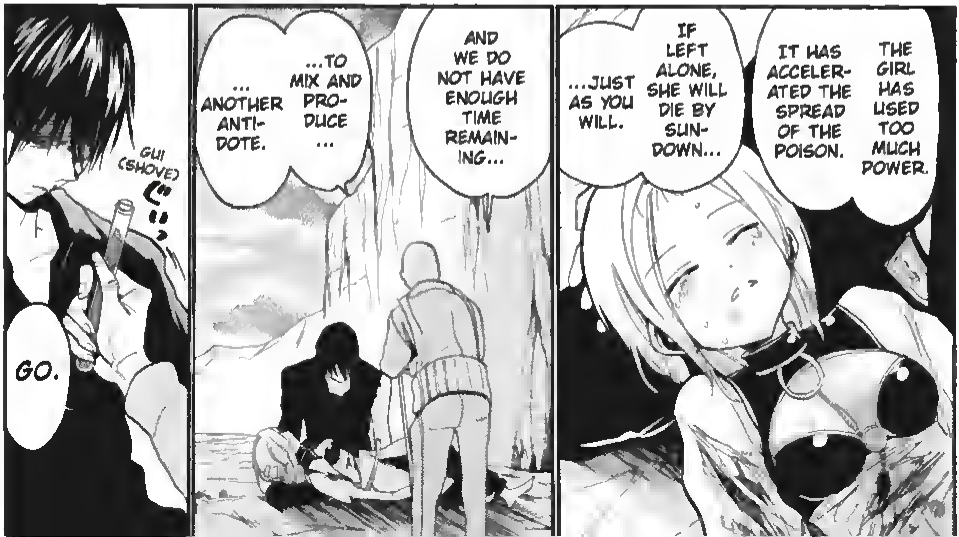

HOW COULD I HAVE BEEN SO STUPID ...!?
LISTEN, DAD. I'M NOT DOING ANY MARTIAL ARTS.
I...I SHOULD HAVE WORKED ON STRENGTH-ENING MYSELF...!
BUT IT'S TOO LATE FOR THAT NOW.
...TO TORMENT YOUNG-STERS WEAKENED BY POISON?
KATSU
KATSU
KATSU (STOK)
... YOUR STYLE ...
IS IT TRULY ...
WHO'S THERE?
STOP RIGHT THERE.
!
I'M SORRY...
I'M SO SORRY ...!!

WHAT DO YOU WANT?
YOU'RE THAT OLD MAN TENTEN TROTS AROUND WITH.
TENGA-SAMA.
CALL ME WHAT YOU WILL.
THEY WOULD NOT DEFEAT ME EVEN AT FULL STRENGTH, THOUGH.
THE WOMAN WAS ILL AS WELL?
.....
TO KILL THEM WOULD BE THE ACT OF A COWARD.
THEY ARE WEAK FROM THE POISON.
.....
.....
...PERHAPS.
"A MAN WHO HAS LOST HIS WARRIOR'S PRIDE"...
SENDAYUU KUZURYUU AND HIS LOT WOULD DOUBTLESS CALL YOU SCUM...

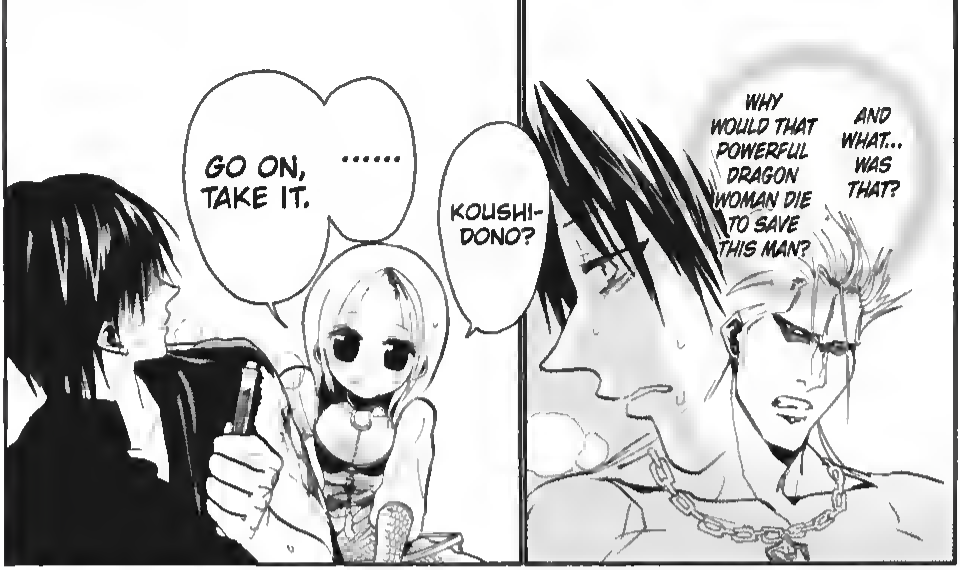


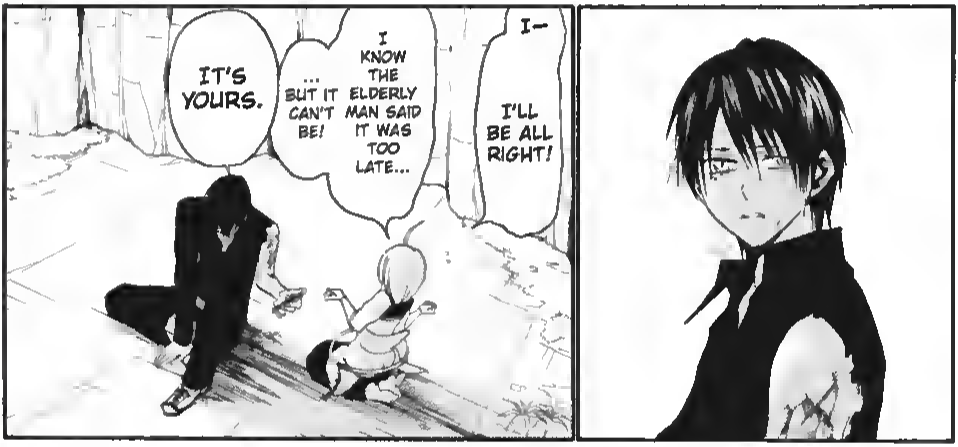

THERE YOU GO.
YOU ARE LUCKY, YOUNGSTERS.
WE'VE GOT A FULL ANTIDOTE, THANKS TO TENGA-SAMA'S MERCY.
NOW THERE WILL BE NO THREAT OF DEATH...

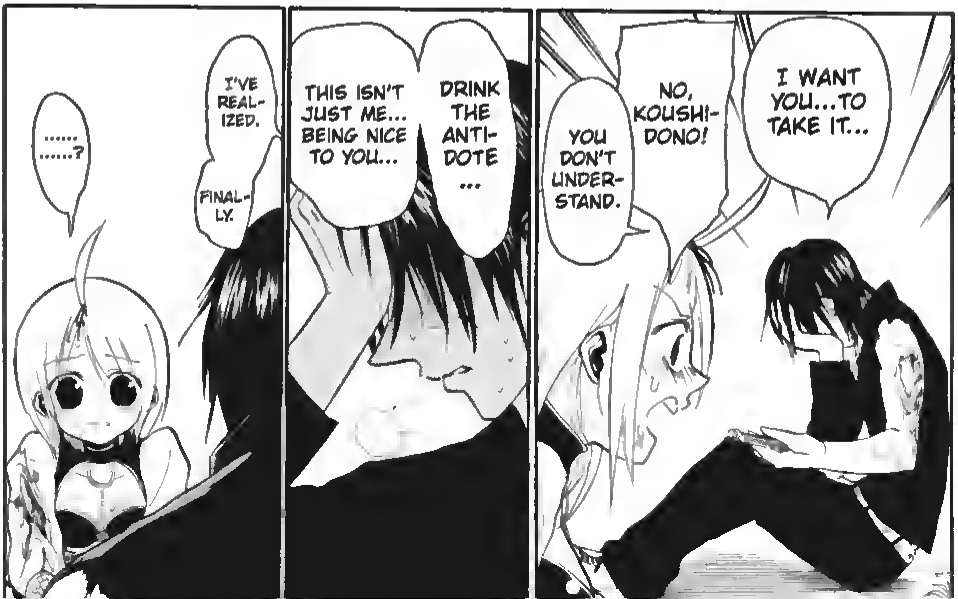
AT LEAST...
...FOR ONE OF YOU.


THE GIRL HAS USED TOO MUCH POWER.
IT HAS ACCELERATED THE SPREAD OF THE POISON.
IF LEFT ALONE, SHE WILL DIE BY SUNDOWN...
...JUST AS YOU WILL.
AND WE DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH TIME REMAINING...
...TO MIX AND PRODUCE ...
... ANOTHER ANTIDOTE.
GUI (SHOVE)
GO.

MAKE YOUR DECISION.
WHICH OF YOU TWO WAR-RIORS...
...DESERVES TO LIVE ON?
WHICH OF YOU TWO WARRIORS DESERVES TO LIVE ON?
.....
SHOW ME YOUR ANSWER...
HAA (HUFF)
HAA (HUFF)
HAA (HUFF)
THAT'S ALL THE PREACH-ING I CAN DO FOR NOW.


GO ON, TAKE IT.
.....
KOUSHI-DONO?
WHY WOULD THAT POWERFUL DRAGON WOMAN DIE TO SAVE THIS MAN?
AND WHAT... WAS THAT?


IT'S YOURS.
... BUT IT CAN'T BE!
I KNOW THE ELDERLY MAN SAID IT WAS TOO LATE...
I— I'LL BE ALL RIGHT!

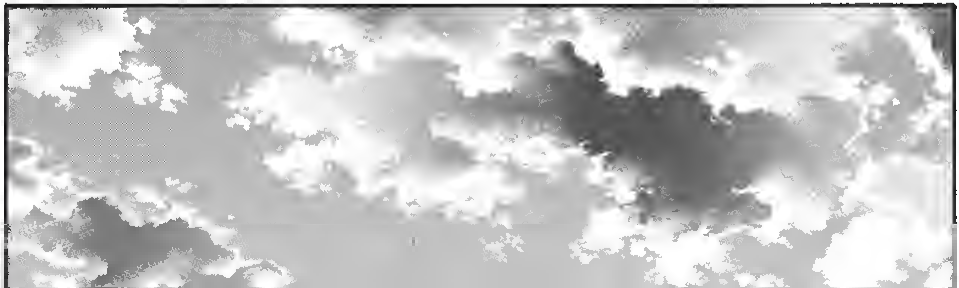

.....?
I'VE REAL-IZED. FINAL-LY.
THIS ISN'T JUST ME... BEING NICE TO YOU...
DRINK THE ANTI-DOTE ...
YOU DON'T UNDER-STAND.
NO, KOUSHI-DONO!
I WANT YOU...TO TAKE IT...

I...
...AM NOT WORTHY...
...OF YOUR HELP.
I KNOW...
...YOU WERE HOPING FOR SOMETHING OUT OF ME...
...BUT I'M SORRY...
I RAN...
...BECAUSE I WAS AFRAID OF MARTIAL ARTS.
I FOCUSED ON BOOKS.
AND BEFORE LONG...
...I WAS AFRAID NOT JUST OF MARTIAL ARTS, BUT EVEN SIMPLE CONFRONTATION.
AND UNTIL RECENTLY, I THOUGHT THAT WAS PERFECTLY FINE.
HA!
PATHETIC...
THEN YOU CAME...
...AND I MADE A FEW IMPROVEMENTS.
BUT NOTHING WORTH MENTIONING.
A FEW LAME PRETENSIONS AT TRAINING...
...WITH ABSOLUTELY NO EFFECT!
I'M JUST A MAN...
...WHO IS INCAPABLE OF DOING ANYTHING.
KOUSHI-DONO.

PLEASE LISTEN TO ME.
THIS IS NOT TRUE...
.....
DEEP WITHIN YOU...
...YOU HARBOR A SPRING OF ASTONISHING POWER.
AS A MEMBER OF THE DRAGON CLAN, WHICH FREELY CONTROLS THE INTERNAL ENERGY OF THE HUMAN BODY...
...I CAN SEE THIS SPRING.
IF YOU TRAIN YOURSELF...
...GIVEN THE RIGHT OPPORTUNITY...
...YOU WILL BE A SPLENDID MARTIAL ARTIST.
YOU WILL GROW STRONG!
STRONG ENOUGH TO DEFEAT EVEN TENGA KOGANE! ...
...WHO WAS BEYOND THE LIMIT OF MY FEMININE FRAILTY.
IT IS FOR THIS REASON ...
... THAT I LEAVE THE MEDICINE WITH YOU.
I HAVE BEEN WITH YOU...
...ALL OF THIS TIME!
YOU UNDERSTAND...
...THAT THIS IS NO MERE ACT OF KINDNESS ...
... KOUSHI-DONO.
.....

PLEASE ...
YOU CAN BE WHAT-EVER YOU WISH TO BE.
...BELIEVE ME WHEN I SAY THAT.

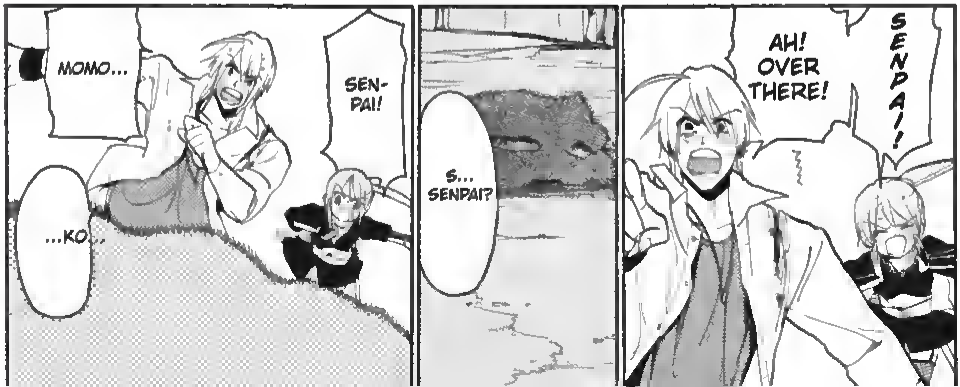
KOUSHI-DONO...
BE-CAUSE I... SELIEVE ...
...IN YOU ...



...I WISH I WAS STRON-GER TOO...
WELL ...
YEAH ...
GYU! (SQUEEZE)

SUN-
DOWN
...

MOMOKO!
INUZUKA!!
IT'S TOO QUIET... ARE THEY REALLY FIGHTING?
OH, PLEASE. IT MUST BE OVER BY NOW.
NO NEED TO RUSH, ANEKI.
I CAN ALREADY TELL YOU ...
...WHO WON THE FIGHT.
HEH
.....
THAT CAN'T BE TRUE ...
IT CAN'T BE!


SENDA!!
AH! OVER THERE!
S... SENPAI?
SEN-PAI!
MOMO...
...KO...

.....
.....
TA
(TMD)

THEY'RE... DEAD...
.....
BOTH OF THEM...
PAT-TERNS ALL OVER THEIR BODIES
IT MUST BE...
...FROM...
...THE POISON...
BUT...
...
...THE ANTI-DOTE?

NEE-SAN?
N...
NEE-SAN!!

AAAA
AAAH
!HH
PI (FLIK)
DOU (SWOOSH)
KOUSHI INU-ZUKA'S RETINUE?
GAN (WHACK)
GAN

IS THAT YOU, TENKA?
THRONE.
BRANCH FAMILY.
BLOOD-LINE.
MAIN FAMILY.
ZA
ZA
ZA (SKF)
PITA (STOP)
ピタ
...THAT A MAN FROM A BRANCH FAMILY STOLE YOUR THRONE.
YOU OUGHT TO HAVE SHOWN OFF THAT EXPRESSION ON THE DAY...
YOU'RE STILL NEVER SEEN THE ELDEST SON LOOK OF THE LIKE MAIN THAT. FAMILY BLOOD-LINE.
SHUT UP, OR I'LL CRUSH YOUR JAW.
...THAN ANY OF THAT GARBAGE ...
I HAD SOMETHING MORE IMPORTANT ...
ピク
PIKU (TWITCH)

...AND YOU STOLE IT!!
ZAN (SLASH)
GU (MMF)

!?
HE LANDED A PUNCH!
GI (GLARE)
GA (WHAK!)
BAAN (WHAMM)

ZAKUUU (SLICE)
GA (CTHUNK)
GA
GA
YOU WILL NOT...
...ESCAPE WITH A MERE BLOW TO THE JAW FROM ME, BOY...
A MARTIAL ARTIST ...
...DARES NOT INSULT HIS BLOOD.
NOR LOSES HIS PRIDE...
...NOR LIVES IN THE LOWER WORLD.
IT IS BECAUSE OF YOUR KIND...
GEHO (KOFF)
GEHO
... THAT TODAY'S WARRIORS ...
...HAVE DECLINED INTO SUCH A PITIABLE STATE.

IS THERE EVEN...
GAAN (THWACK)
JUST LOOK!
...WHO CAN STAND BLOW-TO-BLOW WITH ME?
GOOO (FWUMM)
... PRES-ENT IN THIS TIME AND PLACE ...
...A SINGLE PERSON ...
ZAAN (ZWASHH)
...IT'S MYSELF, FOR BEING BORN IN THIS MEANING-LESS ERA...!!!
IN FACT...
...IF THERE'S ANYONE HERE I AM ENTIRELY DISGUSTED WITH...

I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ...
...ANY-THING OTHER THAN MAR-TIAL ARTS ...
...FROM A MARTIAL ARTIST !!!
GEHO (KOFF)
GEHO
BIRI (BZZT)
BIRI
BIRI
DAMN YOU...
DAMN YOU!
YOU CAN RIP OFF MY ARMS...
...YOU CAN RIP OFF MY HEAD...
...BUT I SWEAR, I WILL SLIT YOUR THROAT WITH MY BLADE!
THIS IS POINT-LESS.
WE'LL ALL GO DOWN...
EVEN I CAN TELL.

...AND NOT ONE OF US IS THAT MONSTER'S EQUAL!!
WHAT CAN I DO?
BUT I CAN'T...
GOTTA MOVE ...
BUT THERE'S NO ESCAPE.
WE HAVE TO RUN.
BY...GOD (WHOOSH)
POTA
POTA (DRIP)
IS THERE TRULY NOTHING ...!?

MOMO
...
GASHI (GRAB)
AT LEAST YOU'LL SERVE AS A DIVERSION!!
I HOPE YOU'LL LAST UNTIL SENDA-YUU ARRIVES.
NOW, FIGHT ME.
YOUR VITALITY IS IMPRESSIVE.
YOU'RE STILL ALIVE.
WOMAN...
ZA (SKFF)
ZA
ZA
GASHI
.....!?
GOOOOOOO (WHMMMM)

CHAPTER 41. THE END OF A LIFE = END

OHH?
SHUT YOUR MOUTH ...
I SUPPOSE IT MUST BE TRUE ... THAT THE POISON HAD WEAKENED YOU.
YOUR BATTLE AURA IS IMPRESSIVE.
SO ...
... FIGHT WITH ME!
IS THAT NOT WHY...
...KOUSHI INUZUKA CHOSE...
...TO GIVE YOU...
...THE ANTIDOTE !?
FU (SWISH)

42. A MOURNFUL HOWL

!?
ZUGAAN
(KABOOOM)
KOUSHI-
DONO...
VUN
(VMMM)
DA
(LEAP)
KOUSHI-
DONO...
KOUSHI-
DONO...

I AM NOT WORTHY...
...OF YOUR HELP.
GA (KA)
YOU AND YOUR MEMORIES!
YOU ARE IRREPLACEABLE TO ME...!
KIIIN (CHIING)
NO... KOUSHI-DONO...

...DURING MY TIME WITH YOU!
...MY LONELINESS WAS ONLY ABATED ...
WHEN I WAS YOUNG...
...AND I LEARNED OF THE JOYS OF LOVE.
I LEARNED TO DREAM OF THE WARMTH OF FAMILY ...
YOU CHANGED ME.
... UNTIL YOU CHANGED MY WORLD.
I HAD BEEN FORLORN...
ALL FROM YOU.
...WITH SUCH A SHORT AND FRAIL EXCUSE FOR A TALON!?
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK YOU CAN CLEAVE ME IN TWO...
WHAT'S WRONG, WOMAN!?

I NEVER KNEW THOSE THINGS...
...UNTIL I MET YOU!!
BAO (BWOOM)
!!?? WHA!
BAGAAAN (BAMMMMM)
バガァァン

HE'S DEAD!!
YOU MURDERED HIM!!
YOU DESTROYED HIM!
BAGOON (KABOOM)
DOGOON (KABOOOM)
BUT THE FATE I WAS BORN INTO...
...WERE OUT OF OUR CONTROL.
...WAS MORE IMPORTANT TO ME THAN ANYTHING...
THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH BOUND US...
GURU (TWIST)
BICHII (SNAP)
GURU
GURU
!?
GUNYAA (SLITHER)

YOU...

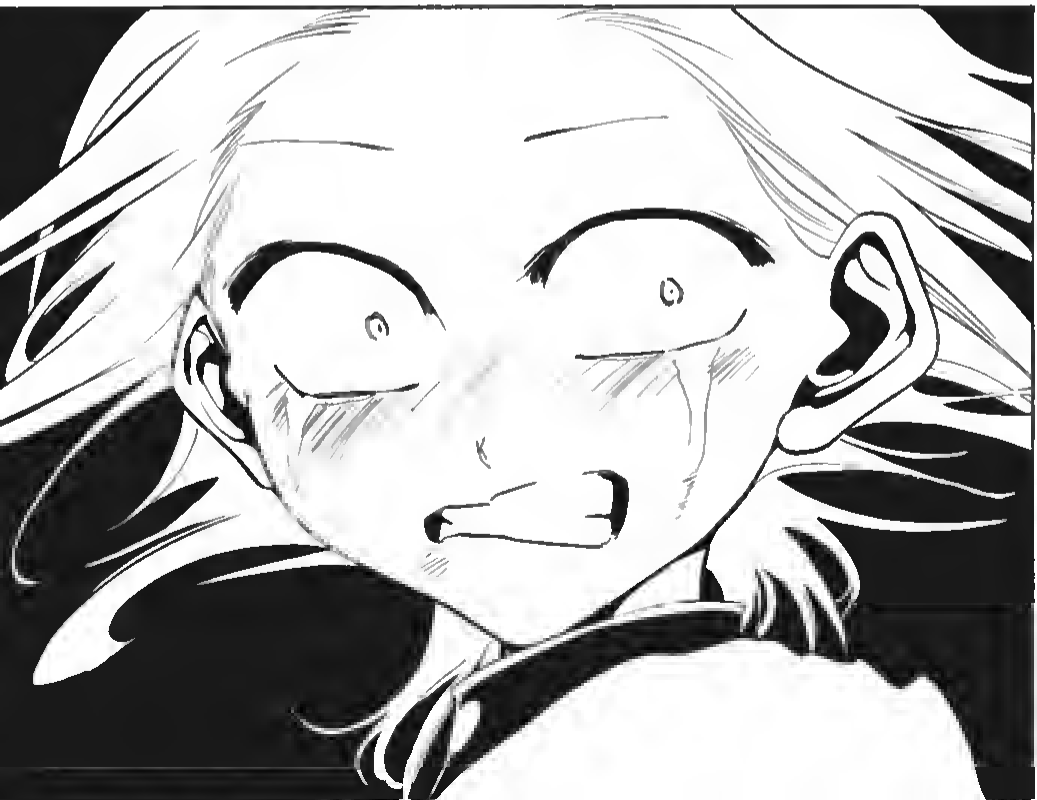
GUA (FWOOO)

KOUSHI-DONO...

DOGOOON (GWABAMM)
YOU TOOK HIS LIFE !!!
YOU TOOK HIS WARMTH !!!
ZUGAN (CRAKK)
YOU TOOK HIS KIND-NESS !!
ZUBAN (THWACK)
YOU TOOK HIS JOYS !!
GON (THUMP)
YOU TOOK...
MOMOKO

...YOU TOOK MY EVERY TO-MOR-ROW WITH HIM...
SLICED

ENOUGH OF YOUR CRYING.
HE DIED ...
... BECAUSE HE WAS WEAK.
AND THE FUTURE OF A WEAK WARRIOR ...
...IS WORTH NOTHING !!!



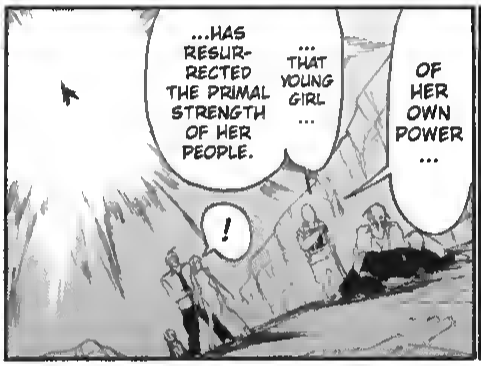
GWA
CRAWWWRO

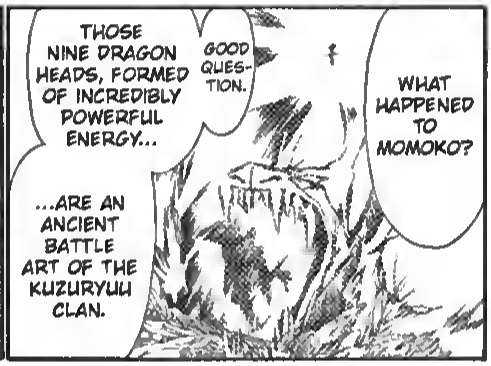
ZUGAN (BWAMM)
GYUUUUN (ZWOOOM)
GO
GO
GO
GO
GO (RMBL)
WHOA ...
OOO (WHOOO)
ZU (ZMM)
ZU
ZU

YOU CAN'T GO TO SLEEP YET?
LET'S TALK ABOUT WHEN YOU'RE GROWN UP.
WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE?
DRIVER
PILOT
ASTRONAUT
OKAY, KOUSHI...
NO...
MARTIAL ARTIST.
THAT'S WHAT DADDY SAID.

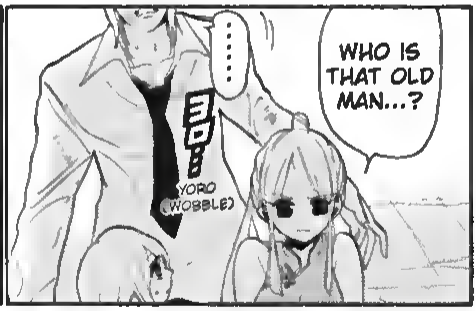
WHAT'S THAT, MOMMY?
HANG ON, KOUSHI. BE STILL.
NORMAL IS THE BEST WAY...
KOUSHI... ...I WANT YOU TO BE A NORMAL BOY.
...AND I WANT YOU TO GROW UP AND LEAD A HAPPY LIFE.
YOU'RE SUCH A GOOD BOY...
I WANT YOU TO LIVE YOUR ENTIRE LIFE WITHOUT KNOWING THOSE THINGS...
...TO CAUSE YOU TO FEEL ANY PAIN OR ANGER OR SADNESS.
I DON'T WANT MOMMY OR DADDY...

.....
.....


...HAS RESURRECTED THE PRIMAL STRENGTH OF HER PEOPLE.
...THAT YOUNG GIRL...
OF HER OWN POWER...
!


THOSE NINE DRAGON HEADS, FORMED OF INCREDIBLY POWERFUL ENERGY...
GOOD QUESTION.
WHAT HAPPENED TO MOMOKO?
...ARE AN ANCIENT BATTLE ART OF THE KUZURYUU CLAN.

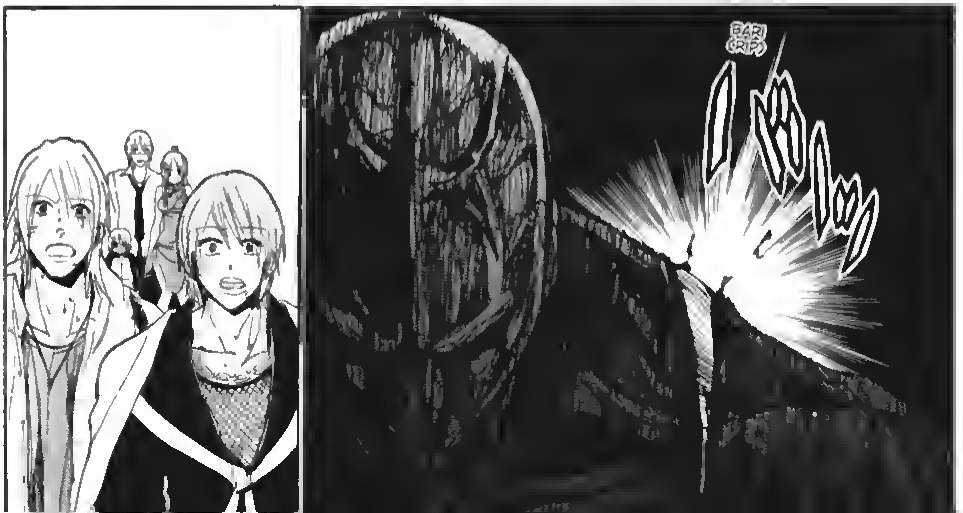
TENGA-NII...
...
NEVER SEEN IT BEFORE...
BLOWN COMPLETELY OFF HIS FEET?
YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT?


.....
WHO IS THAT OLD MAN...?
YORO (WOBBLE)

LOOK!

OH!
...CANNOT HEAL DAMAGE THAT GOES BEYOND ITS LIMITS.
EVEN KOGANEI'S REGENERATION...
OH, HE SUFFERED MUCH MORE'N THAT.
!
12

NO!
LOOK!
... DEAD?
.....
DORO (DRIP)
ドロ…



GARI (CRIP)
ガリッ

ZAWAA (ZWOOSH)
BIRI
BIRI (RIP)
BIRI
AND NOT ONLY THAT...
...AND RECOVERED FROM IT ALREADY!
HE WITHSTOOD THAT ATTACK...
BARI (RIP)
BARI
BARI
GIRAA (GLINT)

ZUZUZU...
GENNNNN
……

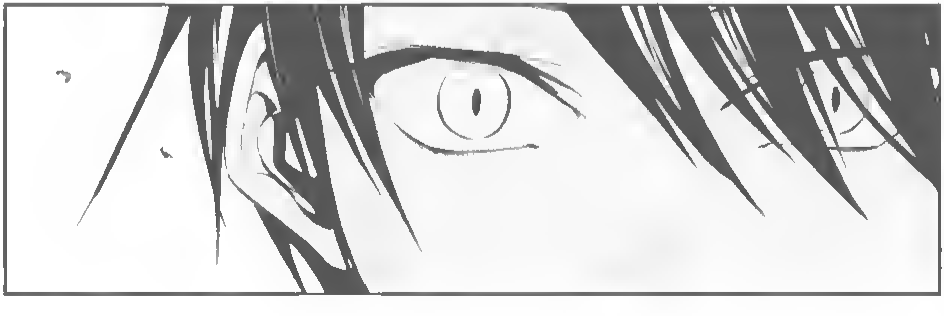
DON (BOOM)
I THANK YOU, WOMAN... WITH YOUR HELP, I HAVE NEAR-GODLY POWER.
NO...I WILL NO LONGER BELITTLE YOUR SEX.
I SHALL USE ALL OF MY STRENGTH TO DEFEAT YOU!

ZUGAGAGA (OOOOOM)
GAGAGAGA (BMMMM)
GYULUN (ZWOOOM)
BAKI
BAKI
BAKI (CRUNCH)
JU (PZW)
JUUU
GO (WHOOSH)
...AND DELIVER A CRIPPLING BLOW!
MUST AVOID HER ATTACKS ...
BUT THE DAMAGE I'M TAKING KEEPS ADDING UP.
IF I TAKE ANOTHER COLOSSAL HIT LIKE THAT NOW, I WON'T BE ABLE TO HEAL THE WOUND.
BIRI (ZZZT)
BIRI
HER ATTACKS ARE EQUAL TO MINE! SUPERB!!

BUN (SWISH)
BAON (SAWOOM)
GAN! (CRAK!)
...WHEN IT COMES TO SPEED!
AS I THOUGHT! I'VE GOT THE EDGE...
NIYA (SMIRK)

...MOMOKO KUZURYUU, DAUGHTER OF SENDAYUU!
OFF-SPRING OF THE MIGHTY DRAGON CLAN...
FINALLY, I WILL HAVE MY QUARRY!
!!
BLUR (WHOOSH)
AND NOW...
...I'VE GOT YOU !!!!

CHAPTER 42: A MOURNFUL HOWL – END

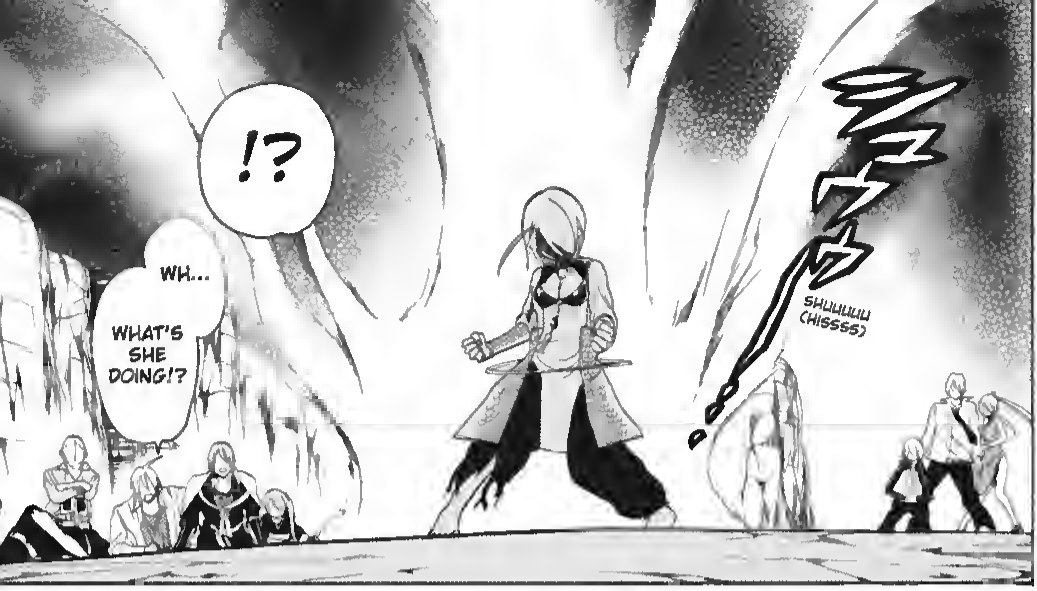


43. RESOLUTION!!

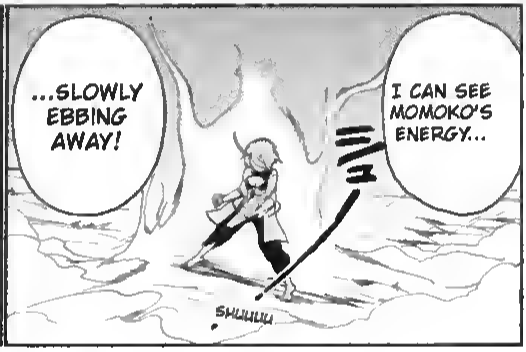
DO THIS...
.....
NO—
.....
SHE GOT HIM GOOD!!
!!
!!
BAGGOOM
BAGGOOM
OH, WHO

GO (VSHH)
DA (ZOOM)
BA (THUD)
ZUGAN (CRANK)
RRGH !!
MEK! (CRUNK)
IT'S WORKING!
!
NOT YET!
SHE HAS TO KEEP IT UP BEFORE HE RE-COVERS!
GAHH!
I CANNOT REGENER-ATE FAST ENOUGH.
KIII (SCREEEE)
I WON'T HOLD OUT MUCH LONGER!
GYURU
GYURU
GYURU (GLRCH)
CAN'T TAKE...
SUU... (SHH)
.....
WHAT'S... THIS?

GO
(BAM)


!?
WH...
WHAT'S SHE DOING!?
SHUUUUU (HISSSS)

NOT THE CASE.
LOOK CLOSER.
HAS SHE FINALLY USED UP ALL HER STRENGTH?

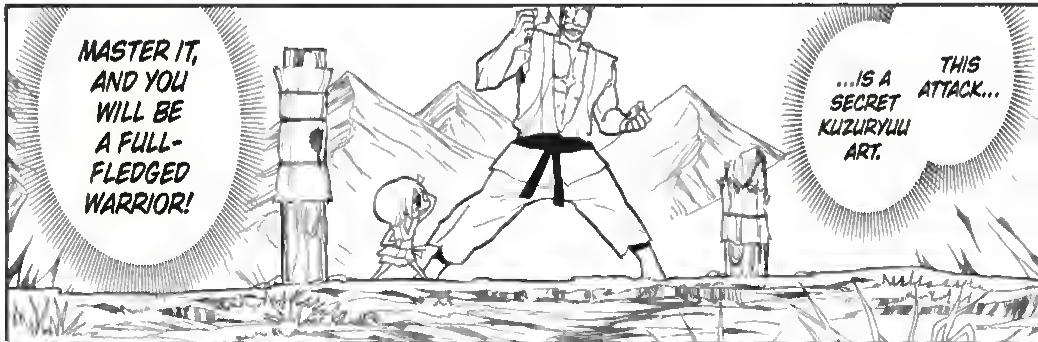

...SLOWLY EBBING AWAY!
I CAN SEE MOMOKO'S ENERGY...
SHUUUU

.....!?
...HAS BEEN CONCEN-TRATED...
ALL OF THAT ENERGY ...

...AND DEVOURING THE MOUN-TAINS.
... GOUGING OUT THE EARTH ...
... SOARING THROUGH THE SKY ...
YOU SAW THE GREAT SERPEN-TINE ENERGY SHE PLIED ABOUT HER...

GIIII
(GREEEAK)

WHAT'S THAT STANCE?
WHAT'S SHE GOING TO DO...?
...OF HER HAND ...!
... INTO THE PALM ...
III...
(EEEAK)


MASTER IT, AND YOU WILL BE A FULL-FLEDGED WARRIOR!
...IS A SECRET KUZURYUU ART.
THIS ATTACK...

I SHOULD HAVE FIGURED A WOMAN COULD NOT MASTER OUR CLAN'S ULTIMATE SKILLS...
NO, NO! THAT WON'T DO!
I MAY BE INEXPERI-ENCED...
KOUSHI-DONO...
I WILL RISK MY LIFE FOR KOUSHI-DONO'S SAKE...
DEFEAT THE KOGA-NEIS!
I SHALL MAKE UP FOR WHAT I LACK WITH EXTRA EFFORT.
...UNTIL THE DAY KOUSHI-DONO ACCEPTS ME!
...TO DISCIPLINE MYSELF AND MY SKILLS...
...BUT I AM DETERMINED ...
KOUSHI-DONO.
...BE VICTO-RIOUS!
I WILL...

OH NO!!
HAIRA ICHI-DEN...
GO (BOOM)

MUST... DODGE...
...SECRET ART!!!
...MU-SOU-RYUU...
GOOO (WHMMM)

...
BUT...
I...
...CAN'T
!!!

TRUE RISING DRAG-ON SPLIT-TING HEAV-EN SHOCK!
DO (BOOM)

UWAAAA
(SHHHHH)
ドオオ
(DOOOOOM)
オ…
オオ

THE CLOUDS JUST SPLIT IN TWO...
AS IF THE SKY ITSELF WAS CUT IN HALF.
OOO (OHHH)
.....
THAT WAY!
HE GOT BLASTED AWAY!
HA (GASP)
WHERE'S TENGA-NII!?
DA (DASH)
.....!
TENGA-NII..?
BOOO (GAPE)
ほ"
THE RISING DRAGON THAT SPLITS THE HEAVENS, JUST AS THE NAME SUGGESTS.
WE... WON?
WE...
...BUT EVERYONE IS DOWN FOR THE COUNT, IT SEEMS...
YOU HAVE WON THE BATTLE ...
WELL, WELL.
IN-DEED.
AH!
!
GURA (SLUMP)

MO-MOKO-CHAN!
IT'S OKAY!
ZU (DRAG)
MO-MOKO-CHAN...
ZU
MO-MOKO-CHAN!
...HE IS LIKELY FAR FROM DEAD.
OF COURSE, KNOWING HIM...
HIS ULTRA-REGENER-ATION RAN OUT.
TENGA'S AURA IS GONE...!
EVERY-THING IS ALL OVER NOW!
BIKU (FLINCH)
STOP...
IT'S ALL OVER!
YOU WON THE FIGHT.
ZURU (SLUMP)
.....AH...

IT'S OVER.
YES ...OF COURSE ..

...THAT POWER YOU WIELD.
VERY IMPRES-SIVE...
AS IS...
THAT WAS QUITE THE ATTACK.

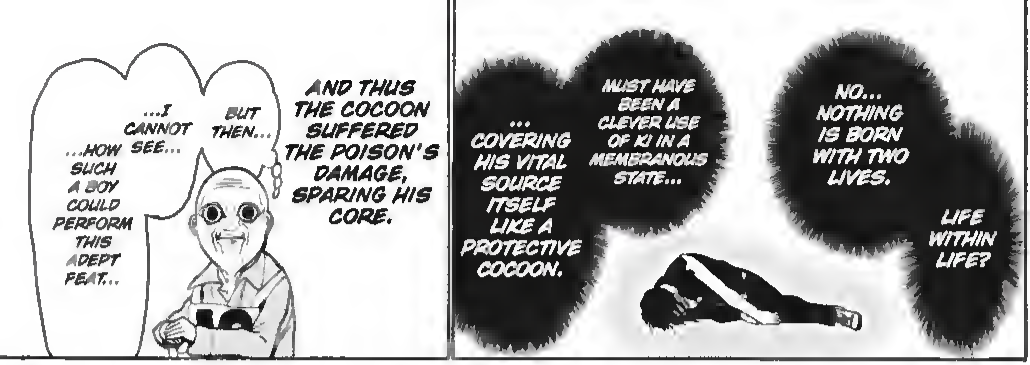
...STUN-NING VITALITY.
...THIS BOY'S ...

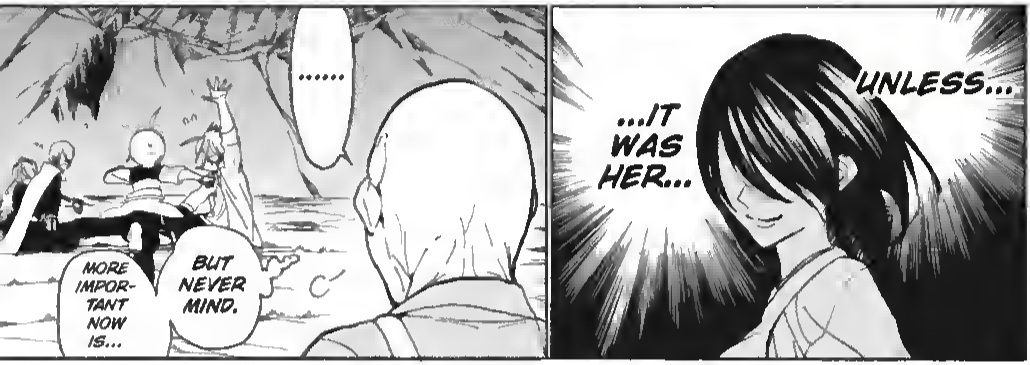
.....?

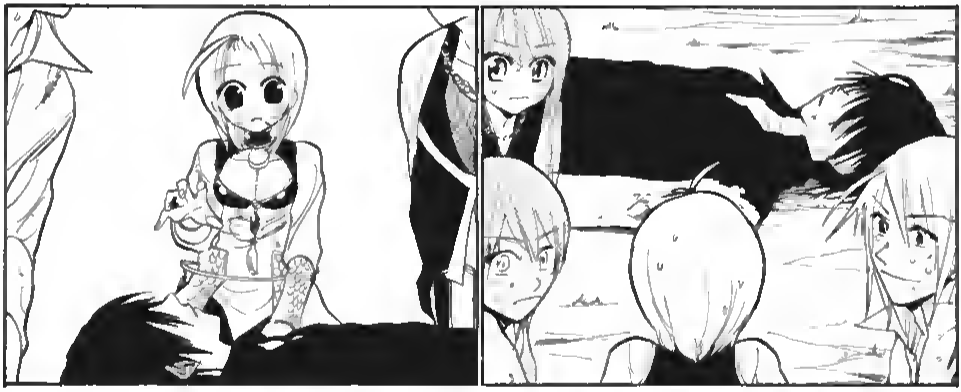
.....
EVERYTHING.
.....

STILL OUT COLD, YES... BUT LOOK.
HE IS ALIVE.
HE OVERCAME THE POISON WITH ONLY HIS OWN INTERNAL ENERGY...
THE POISON IS SLOWLY FADING.
AND YET...
...HOW QUEER...
AH!

...BOTH KI AND POISON WERE FULLY SPENT.
...AND AFTER A DREADFUL BATTLE...
"EACH ENTIRELY NEUTRALIZED THE OTHER.
BUT HE FOUGHT AGAINST THAT PREDATORY POISON AS IT SAPPED HIS LIFE...
I AM POSITIVE...
...THAT THE POISON WAS DEVOURING HIS "KI."
I WAS CERTAIN THAT I HAD SEEN THE AURA SURROUNDING HIM—HIS VERY LIFE ITSELF—VANISH INTO NOTHINGNESS...
AND YET...
...THERE WAS HIDDEN ANOTHER SOURCE OF VITAL ENERGY...
...WITHIN THE SPIRITUAL FORCE THAT WAS WIPED OUT BY THE POISON...

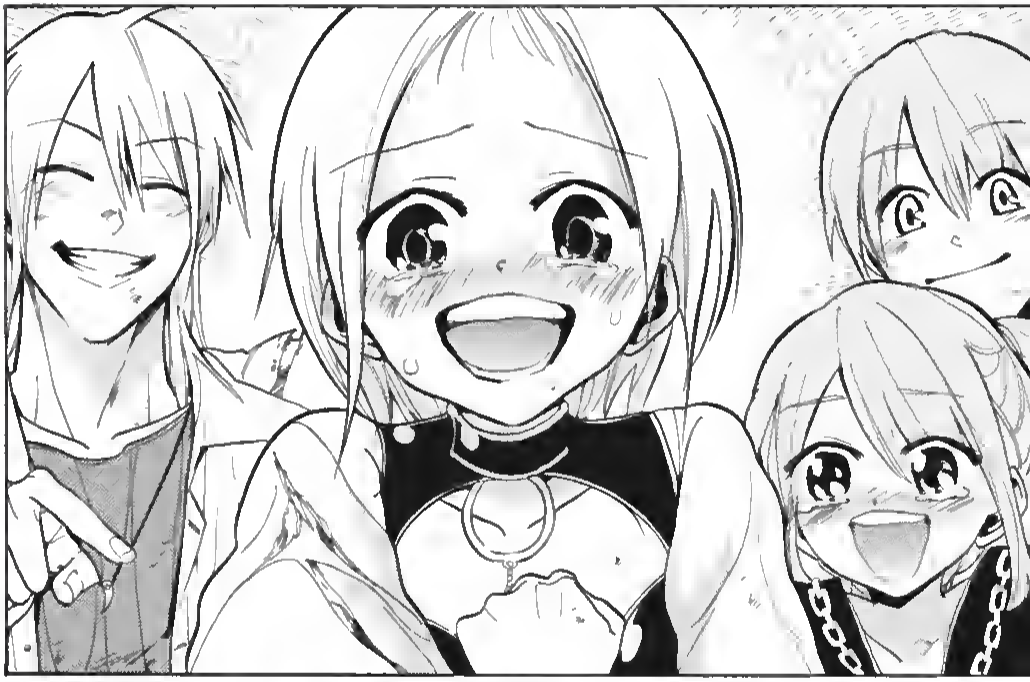

AND THUS THE COCOON SUFFERED THE POISON'S DAMAGE, SPARING HIS CORE.
BUT THEN...
...I CANNOT SEE...
...HOW SUCH A BOY COULD PERFORM THIS ADEPT FEAT...
... COVERING HIS VITAL SOURCE ITSELF LIKE A PROTECTIVE COCOON.
MUST HAVE BEEN A CLEVER USE OF KI IN A MEMBRANOUS STATE...
NO... NOTHING IS BORN WITH TWO LIVES.
LIFE WITHIN LIFE?


.....
MORE IMPOR-TANT NOW IS...
BUT NEVER MIND.
...IT WAS HER...
UNLESS...



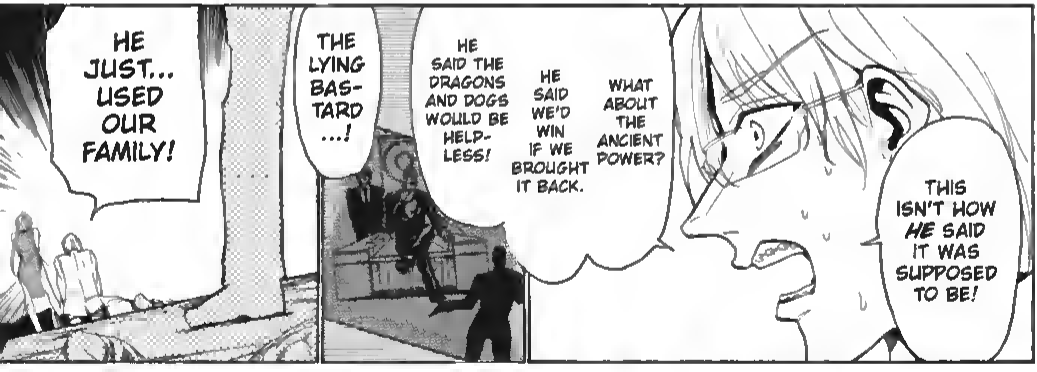
SO (STROKE)...

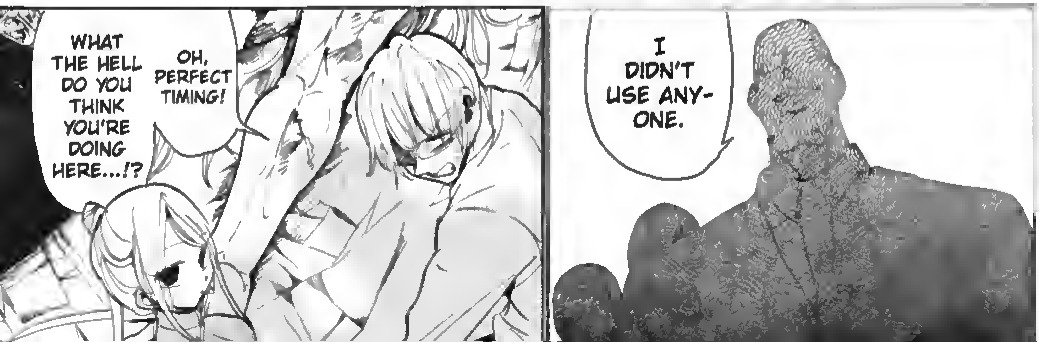
PIKU
(TWITCH)



...WHEN NO CHILD MUST PERISH.
IT IS TRULY A GOOD DAY...

...IT'S NOT WORKING...
I DON'T UNDER-STAND.
DAMMIT...
WHAT HAPPENED TO THE REGENER-ATION!?
ANIKI ...
ANIKI!!


HE JUST... USED OUR FAMILY!
THE LYING BAS-TARD ...!
HE SAID THE DRAGONS AND DOGS WOULD BE HELP-LESS!
HE SAID WE'D WIN IF WE BROUGHT IT BACK.
WHAT ABOUT THE ANCIENT POWER?
THIS ISN'T HOW *HE* SAID IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE!

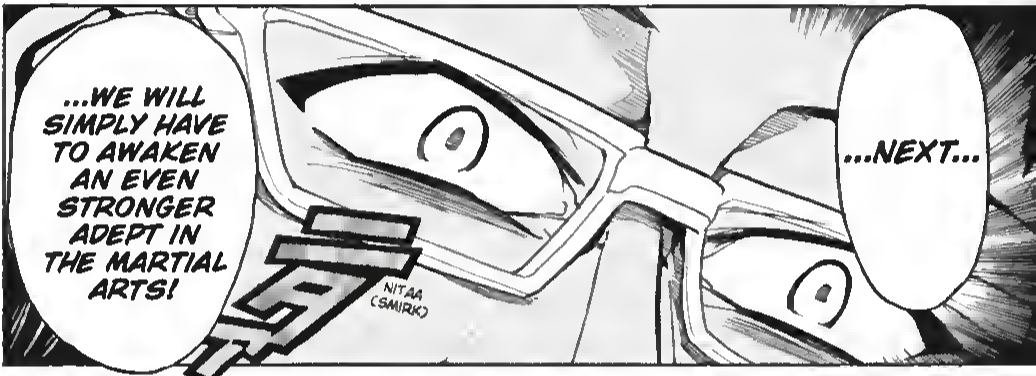

WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING HERE...!?
OH, PERFECT TIMING!
I DIDN'T USE ANY-ONE.

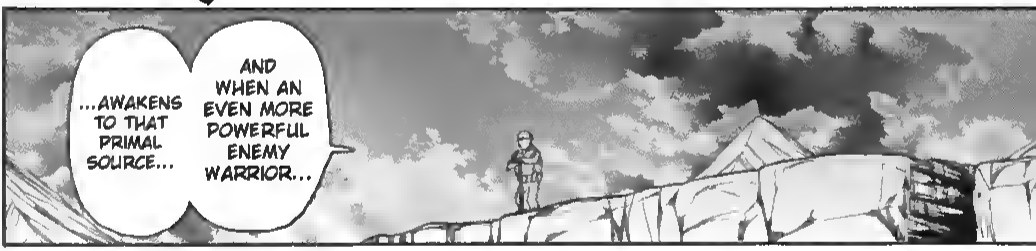
MIKI? HISA ENDOU!!
...OH, JUST...
...CHECKING UP ON YOU.
ZA (ZSHH)
YOU DIRTY...
CHECKING UP!? AFTER THE FIGHT IS ALREADY OVER...!?
HE ONLY CAME BECAUSE IT'S OVER.
HMM?
...WOULD HAVE BEEN RESEARCHED AND DEVELOPED FOR THEMSELVES.
...THAT YOU SNEAKY MONKEYS GAVE TO HIM...
PERHAPS THE SPECIAL ANCIENT POWERS OF REGENERATION...
...AND THE ENEMY HAD CAPTURED HIM?
WHAT IF TENGANII HAD LOST...

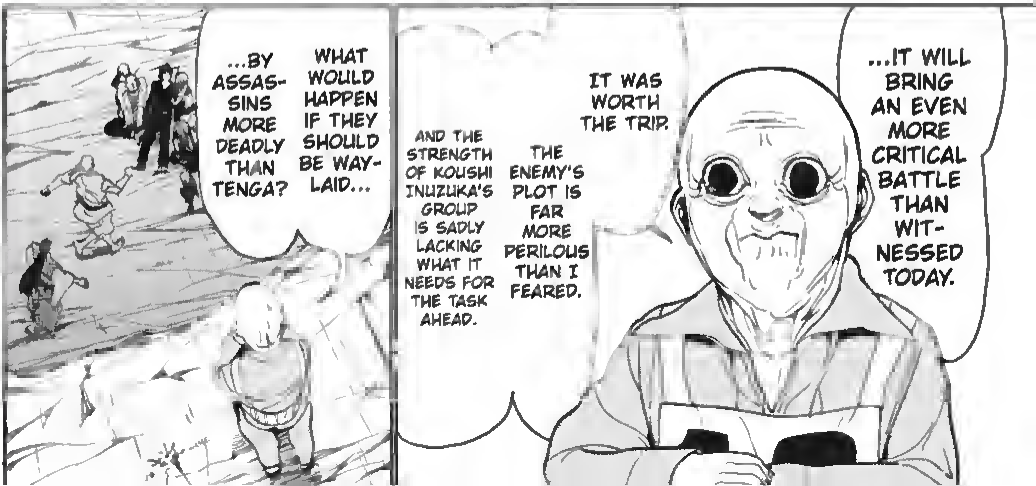
.....
I SUPPOSE WE CAN CALL THIS A DAY...
.....
IT WASN'T AS FUN AS I'D HOPED IT WOULD BE.
OH WELL!
AT LEAST ...
...FOR THE FIRST TIME...
...IT SEEMED LIKE HE WAS ACTUALLY ENJOYING HIMSELF.
CHIRA (PEEK)
PLUS ...
GOOO (VMMMM)
...I FOUND SOMETHING EVEN MORE FUN TO OCCUPY MYSELF WITH. ♡
AHH... THAT IS NICE.
BUT WE DO NOT CONSIDER THIS TO BE A GAME.
MOI MOI KOOOO...
GOOOO
...NOT WHEN WE MUST GO TO SUCH LENGTHS...
...TO AVOID THOSE TWO MONSTERS.

...WE HAVE PROVED THAT THE RESURRECTION METHOD WORKS!
THANKS TO TENGA-KUN'S TEST CASE TODAY...
...IS JUST A MATTER OF PATIENCE.
...SUCH SNEAKING ABOUT...
AND YET...

AND NEXT...


...WE WILL SIMPLY HAVE TO AWAKEN AN EVEN STRONGER ADEPT IN THE MARTIAL ARTS!
...NEXT...
NITAA (SMIRK)


...AWAKENS TO THAT PRIMAL SOURCE...
AND WHEN AN EVEN MORE POWERFUL ENEMY WARRIOR...


...BY ASSASSINS MORE DEADLY THAN TENGA?
WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THEY SHOULD BE WAYLAID...
AND THE STRENGTH OF KOUSHI INUZUKA'S GROUP IS SADLY LACKING WHAT IT NEEDS FOR THE TASK AHEAD.
THE ENEMY'S PLOT IS FAR MORE PERILOUS THAN I FEARED.
IT WAS WORTH THE TRIP.
...IT WILL BRING AN EVEN MORE CRITICAL BATTLE THAN WITNESSED TODAY.

...UNKEN AND COMPANY'S REIGN COULD BE CHAL-LENGED!!
AFTER SO LONG...
OVER HERE.
THE TIME IS NOW.
IT SEEMS I HAVE NO CHOICE.
COME.
SIGH ...
IT SEEMS I MUST NOW CALL UPON YOUR STRENGTH...
ZA
KIRA (SPARKLE)
BASA (FLAP)
(GA (THUD)
FUWA (FSHH)
ZA (ZSHH)

ZAN
BYUOOOOOOO
GWHOOOOSH

THAT ONE THERE ...
THAT IS THE BOY.
THAT'S HIM?
HEH...
OHH?
THAT'S HIM?

KOUSHI INUZUKA.
THE BATTLE WITH THE KOGA-NEIS WAS OVER...
...AND KOUSHI'S FORCE LEFT FOR HOME WITH ALL MEMBERS ALIVE AND INTACT.
BUT IT WOULD BE ONLY SCANT DAYS BEFORE THEY WERE PLAGUED BY EVEN MORE POWERFUL FOES.

CHAPTER 43..RESOLUTION!! - END

44. WELCOME HOME, AS ALWAYS

I'LL BE DEAD IN A WEEK...
I WISH...
DAD, ALL I CAN FEEL RIGHT NOW IS REGRET.
I WISH...
WHAT'S GOING ON?
I WANT TO TRY TO READ OUR MARTIAL ARTS SCROLLS...
THIS TIME, WE'LL STOP THE KOGANEIS!
はっ
HA (GASP)
...I HAD TAKEN THE TIME TO TRAIN MYSELF!!
OVER FIVE DAYS SINCE THE POISON'S TIME LIMIT...
...KOUSHI WAS STILL ALIVE.
JUST A DREAM.
.....
.....
CHUN
CHUN (CHIRP)

HE HAD NO MEMORY AT ALL...
HE REMEMBERED NEITHER THAT HE REGAINED HIS WITS AT ONE POINT...
...OF WHAT HAPPENED AFTER SUNSET.
...NOR THE DREAM HE SAW.
...THREE FULL DAYS OF SLEEP BROUGHT HIM BACK TO PERFECT CONDITION.
AS FOR HIS HEALTH ...
HOWEVER, KOUSHI ASIDE...

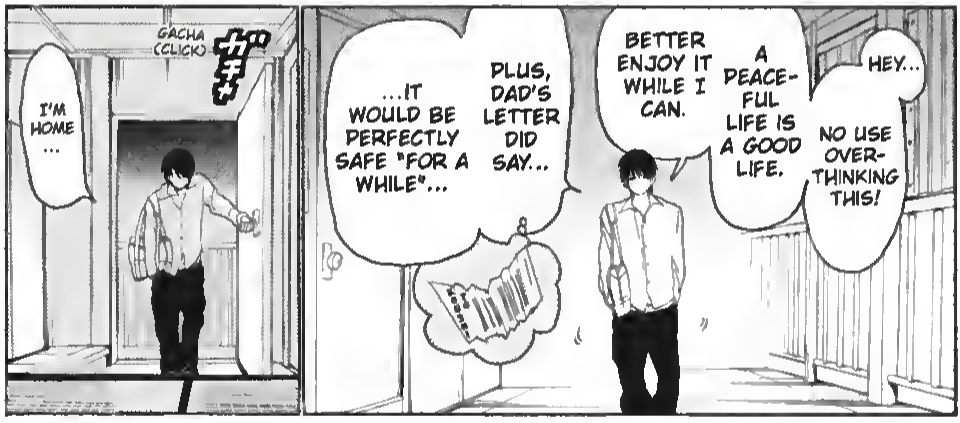
...MOMOKO HAD SPENT ALL OF HER ENERGY AND WAS RECOVERING UNDER SENDAYUU'S CARE.
THE OTHERS STILL HAD NOT HEALED FROM THEIR WOUNDS EITHER.
SO WHILE IT COULDN'T BE SAID THAT ALL WAS NORMAL AGAIN...

ZOOZ-ZOOZ-
ZOOZ-ZOOZ-
HEY, LOOK.
!
!
YO!
IS THAT YOU, INUZUKA-KUN?
ZA (SKFF)

GA (GRAB)
Y'KNOW?
I THINK YOU OWE US SOME ANSWERS.
WHERE'D YOU GO?
SOMEBODY HAD THE GUTS TO DITCH SCHOOL FOR AN ENTIRE WEEK!
OH... YEAH, I WAS AWAY.
LONG TIME NO SEE.
SARA (SWISH)
UH.
Y-YEAH.
I MEAN ...
.....
YEAH, HE'S STILL A WUSS DEEP DOWN!
THE STUPID CHICKEN ...
W-WELL, DAMN. LOOK WHO'S MR. COOL-GUY NOW.
JUST A CLASS-MATE.
WHO WAS THAT?
.....
.....
NICE TO SEE YOU.

AFTER FACING UNFATHOMABLY POWERFUL ENEMIES, KOUSHI HAD BROUGHT BACK SOME SMALL MEASURE OF CONFIDENCE...
...TO HIS NORMAL, EVERYDAY LIFE.
...HE WAS ALWAYS A WUSS... RIGHT?
BLACKBOARD.
DESK.
CLASSROOM.
.....?
HUH?
OR SO IT SEEMED...
...THERE'S JUST SOMETHING... OFF ABOUT IT.
IT'S ALL HOW IT SHOULD BE...
HE THERE?
HE'S THERE
GIRA (GLINT)
.....
WHAT COULD IT BE?

KOUSHI INUZUKA...
...YOUR BATTLES ARE FAR FROM OVER!


I'M HOME...
GACHA (CLICK)
...IT WOULD BE PERFECTLY SAFE "FOR A WHILE"...
PLUS, DAD'S LETTER DID SAY...
BETTER ENJOY IT WHILE I CAN.
A PEACE-FUL LIFE IS A GOOD LIFE.
HEY...
NO USE OVER-THINKING THIS!

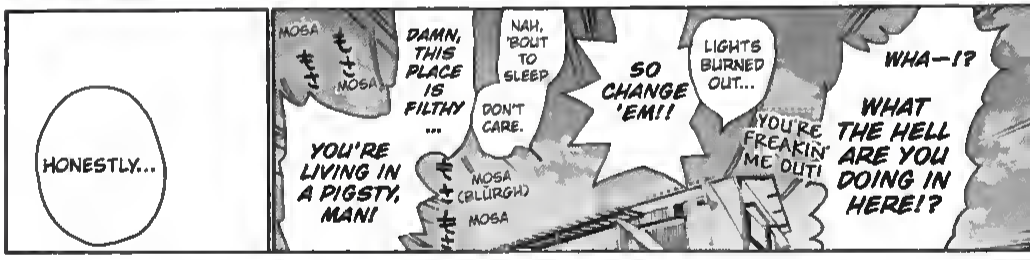
...BUT SHE NEEDS TO RECUPERATE AT HOME FOR A WHILE.
SHE'S NOT IN ANY DANGER OF DYING...
I SEE...
I'M THE ONLY ONE HERE NOW.
WHY WOULDN'T IT BE?
.....
WHY IS MY BED STILL UN-MADE?
WHAT'S THE DEAL?
SHIIIN (SILENCE)

PORI (SCRATCH)
PORI
...
NOSO (PLOD)
のそ
...
WHAT-EVER.
I'LL DEAL...
JUST GONNA SLEEP IN IT AGAIN, ANYWAY.
NOSO
のそ

HMM ...
INSTANT RAMEN, IT IS.
GOSO (RUSTLE)
ごそ...
GARAN (EMPTY)
がらん
GUESS I'LL EAT.
NOTHIN' TO DO.
EAT WHAT?

INUZU-KAAA?
HEEEY!
GACHA
ガチャ
PAJA-MAS ...
I'LL JUST GO TO BED.
AW, HELL.
GUSHA (SHLOMP)
ぐしゃ...
NONE. ...
UNDER-WEAR.
HUH?
LIGHT-BULB BURNED OUT.
KET-TLE...
NO POWER!
GREAT.
WATER!
JAAAA (FSHHH)
GOCHA (CLANK)
ごちゃ

GAAH!
ビク!
BIKU (FLINCH)

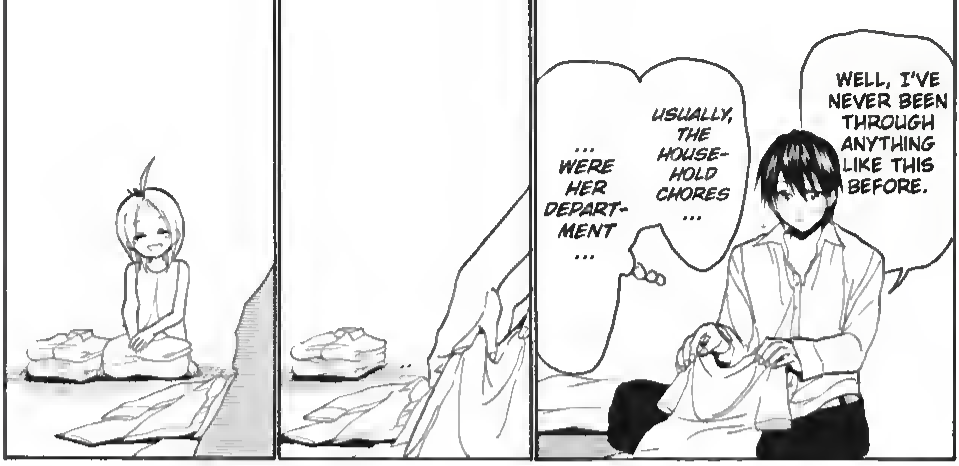

HONESTLY...
MOSA
MOSA
YOU'RE LIVING IN A PIGSTY, MAN!
DAMN, THIS PLACE IS FILTHY ...
NAH, 'BOUT TO SLEEP.
DON'T CARE.
MOSA (BLURGH)
MOSA
SO CHANGE 'EM!!
LIGHTS BURNED OUT...
YOU'RE FREAKIN' ME OUT!
WHA—!?
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING IN HERE!?

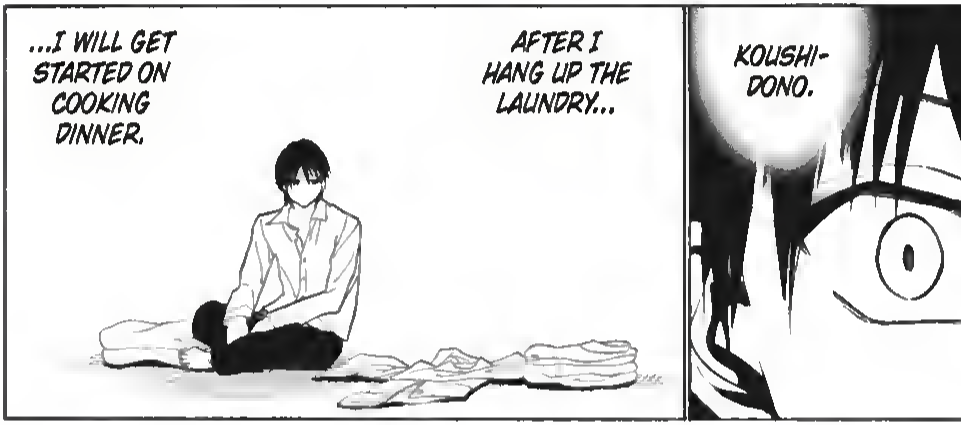
FUNNY, YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A CHORE MACHINE FOR IROHA...
YOU SAY SOME-THING?
DON'T YOU KNOW HOW TO DO SIMPLE CHORES?
IT'S GOOD ..
THANKS SO MUCH.
EAT SOME (OF HANZOU'S) HOMEMADE FOOD!
HERE
... KOUSHI-KUN.
...YOU'RE A PRETTY HELPLESS GUY ON YOUR OWN...

IF YOU LEAVE THESE GROSS BOXERS LYING AROUND I'M GONNA THROW THEM AWAY
TENCHI BUGS THE HELL OUT OF ME IF I DON'T TIDY THINGS UP.
SHUT UP!
SOUNDS LIKE YOUR LITTLE BROTHER HAS YOU WHIPPED.
SO I SEE. YOU'VE BEEN LIVING TOGETHER SINCE THEN, HUH?
むにゃ MUNYA
むにゃ MUNYA CHMMYA
AHH, WELL. YOU'RE A MAN LIVING ALONE. YOU CAN'T HELP IT.
OH YEAH? WELL, WHAT ABOUT YOU?
I'M GETTING ALONG JUST FINE! ME? THESE DAYS, AT LEAST.

IF YOU DON'T MIND ME OFFERING ...
HEY, I KNOW!
...I'D BE HAPPY TO CLEAN YOUR PLACE UP FOR YOU!
THANKS, IROHA-CHAN...

HAVE YOU ALWAYS BEEN THIS SLOPPY WITH YOUR LIVING ARRANGE-MENTS?
LOOK AT THIS! THEY TURNED OFF YOUR GAS.
BOXERS


WELL, I'VE NEVER BEEN THROUGH ANYTHING LIKE THIS BEFORE.
USUALLY, THE HOUSE-HOLD CHORES ...
... WERE HER DEPART-MENT ...


...I WILL GET STARTED ON COOKING DINNER.
AFTER I HANG UP THE LAUNDRY...
KOUSHI-DONO.

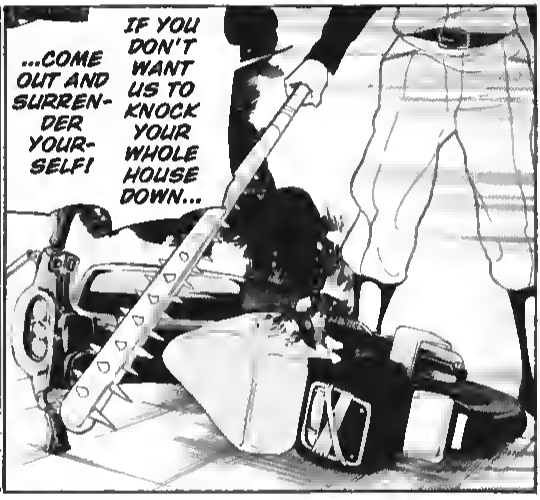
OH, KOUSHI-DONO!
I'LL LEAVE YOUR CHANGE OF CLOTHES ON THE COUNTER!
KOUSHI-DONO!
THE BATH IS ALL READY.
TONIGHT WE ARE HAVING SABLEFISH MEUNIÈRE!
KOUSHI-DONO...

I GUESS YOU'RE PRETTY MUCH HELP-LESS...
...WITHOUT THAT WIFE OF YOURS AROUND...
MO-MO-KO...
I'M NOT SULKING!
THEN WHY ARE YOU SULKING LIKE THIS!?
SHE'S NOT MY WIFE.
YOU SOUND LONELY.
I'M NOT LONELY.
SHE'S AN ANNOY-ANCE.
SHHH (SILENCE)
.....
I WISH SHE'D COME BACK... AS SOON AS SHE CAN...
I'M SUPOSED TO BE GRATEFUL FOR THIS!
WHY AM I GETTING SO DEPRESSED!?
HA (GASP)
ぱっ

IT'S THE NORMAL LIFE I'VE BEEN MISSING ALL THIS TIME.
JIIN (THROB)
...I WOKE UP IN THE MORNING, WENT TO SCHOOL, ATE DINNER, AND READ THE NEWSPAPER.
FINALLY ...
IT'S BACK WITHIN MY GRASP.
THE SENSE OF NORMALITY I'VE DESIRED.
THIS IS THE LIFE I WAS HOPING FOR...
HER ABSENCE IS A MINOR FOOTNOTE AT BEST. WHY AM I FEELING SO UPSET?
DON (BOOM)
I'M BACK HOME!
GARA (SLAM)
!?
WHAT WAS THAT?

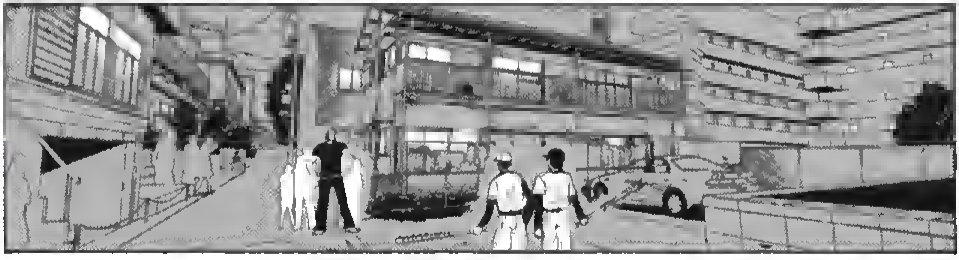
WE KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE!
KOUSHI INUZUKA!

YOUR FATHER SAID THERE WOULDN'T BE ANY...
THAT CAN'T BE RIGHT.
GREAT, MORE ASSASSINS?


...COME OUT AND SURRENDER YOURSELF!
IF YOU DON'T WANT US TO KNOCK YOUR WHOLE HOUSE DOWN...

ゴォォ
GOOO (WHOOSH)
...THEY PROBABLY AREN'T FROM THE OTHER CLANS!
WHICH MEANS...
YEAH...
"...THE OTHER CLANS WILL WAIT AND WATCH!"
"...HAS BEEN SAFELY QUASHED...
"WHEN THIS KOGANEI REBELLION...

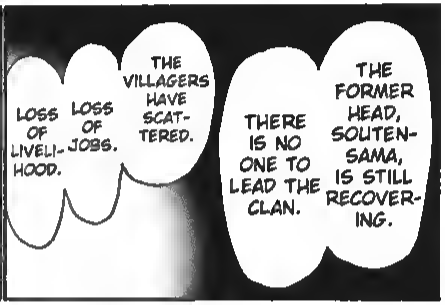
ZAN (SLASH)
WE SEEK VEN-GEANCE... FOR TENGA-SAMA AND FOR THE HONOR OF THE KOGANEI CLAN!
YOU WILL NOT GO UNPUN-ISHED!
SIMPLE VILLAGERS.
THEY'RE FROM KOGANEI!?

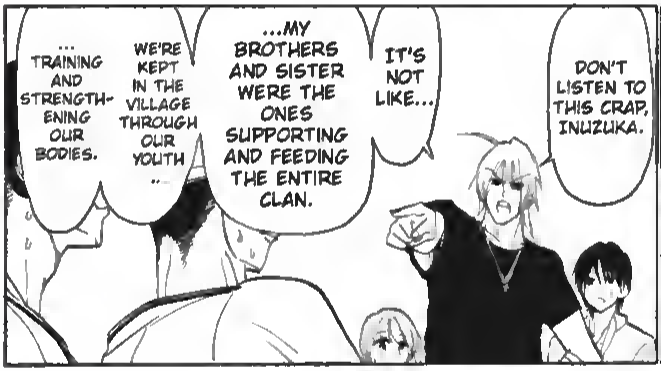


WHAT?
...AND DO YOU EVEN HAVE A CLUE AS TO THE SORRY STATE OF THE CLAN!?
ELDEST SON AND HEIR TO THE FAMILY...
SILENCE, YOU DIS-GRACE!
...WHY ARE YOU HERE?
GUYS...

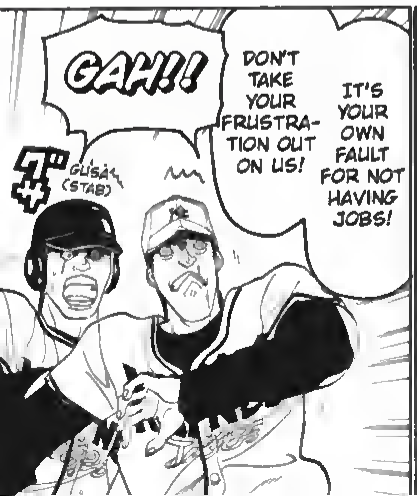
OUR LEADER, TENGA-SAMA.
TENTEN-SAMA.
TENREI-SAMA.
ALL THREE HAVE GONE MISS-ING.
WE CANNOT FIND THEM.

ALL BECAUSE OF YOU!
HUNDREDS OF INNOCENT VILLAG-ERS..
...WHO HAD NO KNOWL-EDGE OF THE REBELLION IN THE FIRST PLACE!
CAN YOU IMAGINE THEIR SUFFER-ING!?
.....


THE FORMER HEAD, SOUTEN-SAMA, IS STILL RECOVER-ING.
THERE IS NO ONE TO LEAD THE CLAN.
THE VILLAGERS HAVE SCAT-TERED.
LOSS OF JOBS.
LOSS OF LIVELI-HOOD.


DON'T LISTEN TO THIS CRAP, INUZUKA.
IT'S NOT LIKE...
...MY BROTHERS AND SISTER WERE THE ONES SUPPORTING AND FEEDING THE ENTIRE CLAN.
WE'RE KEPT IN THE VILLAGE THROUGH OUR YOUTH ..
... TRAINING AND STRENGTH-ENING OUR BODIES.

OH, STUFF IT!


IT'S YOUR OWN FAULT FOR NOT HAVING JOBS!
DON'T TAKE YOUR FRUSTRA-TION OUT ON US!
GAH!!
GUSA (STAB)

...AND MAKE GOBS AND GOBS OF MONEY IN PROFES-SIONAL SPORTS!
THEN, ONCE WE'RE ADULTS, THE TALENTED ONES LEAVE THE VILLAGE ...
SO WHAT ARE TWO GROWN MEN STILL DOING AT HOME, RATHER THAN MAKING MONEY!?
THEY DON'T EVEN COME BACK UNTIL THEY'RE RETIRED!

GYAA
GYAA
...REALLY MARTIAL ARTISTS?
ARE THOSE GUYS ...
HUH?
GYAA
GYAA (CRASH)
GYAA
.....?
HEY...
ENJOY SMIRKING WHILE YOU CAN, 'COS IT WON'T LAST!
HOW DARE YOU LOOK DOWN ON US, KOUSHI INUZUKA!
YOU'LL PAY FOR THIS!
YOU CAN'T HUMILIATE US LIKE THAT!

...USED TO ABSOLUTELY TERRIFY ME...
...HELL, JUST THE BULLIES IN MY CLASS...
ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING THAT, TYPICALLY, ASSASSINS...
...THEY DON'T SEEM VERY THREATEN-ING.
IT'S WEIRD...
KOGANEI
KOGANEI

...BECAUSE NOW I KNOW...
AM I JUST NOT SCARED...
...OF PEOPLE WHO ARE MUCH, MUCH WORSE?

HUH?
YEAH, INU-ZUKA.
TAKE THEM OUT!
THAT'S AN AWFUL COCKY ATTITUDE YOU GOT. I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU TRY US!
AND BEEN IN COMBAT WITH THEM!?
I CAN'T DO IT.
WE'LL LEAVE THEM TO YOU.
YOU'RE IN THE BEST SHAPE OUT OF ANY OF US.
WE STILL AREN'T OVER OUR INJURIES.
I MEAN, LOOK ...
AND THEY'RE JUST SCRUBS.
YEAH...
YOU'RE ON!!
I NEVER ACTUALLY GOT ANY STRONGER.
...ALL I DID WAS ACCUSTOM MYSELF TO FEAR.
WHAT!?
I WAS BUSY DYING FROM POISON.
I DIDN'T DO JACK!
"BEEN IN COMBAT WITH THEM"?
THAT'S RIGHT... WHEN YOU GET DOWN TO IT...
...THAT SHE ENDS UP BEING TOTALLY UNHELPFUL TOO!!
AND IT'S USUALLY IN THESE PRECISE SITUA-TIONS...
GREAT.
WAY TO BE HELP-FUL, GUYS.
OH, CRAP.
YOU CAN DO IT.

BUT SHE'S ALWAYS HERE...
SHE'S NOT HERE.
"ALWAYS"?
WE WERE ONLY TOGETHER FOR A FEW MONTHS.
.....
HOW CAN THAT BE?
HOW IS IT THAT WHEN I THINK OF HER...
KOUSHI-DONOOO...
...MY BRAIN ATTACHES THE CONCEPT OF "ALWAYS"!?
AND NOW I'M HEARING THINGS.

ゴォォ
GOOO (VMMM)
WHAT'S THAT?
HMM?
ゴォォ
GOOO
... HUGE ...
WHAT'S THAT...
ドドド

KOUSHI-DONOOO!
KOUSHI-DONOOO!
KOUSHI-DONOOO!
GYUUUUN (ZOOOOM)
AAAAH
H!

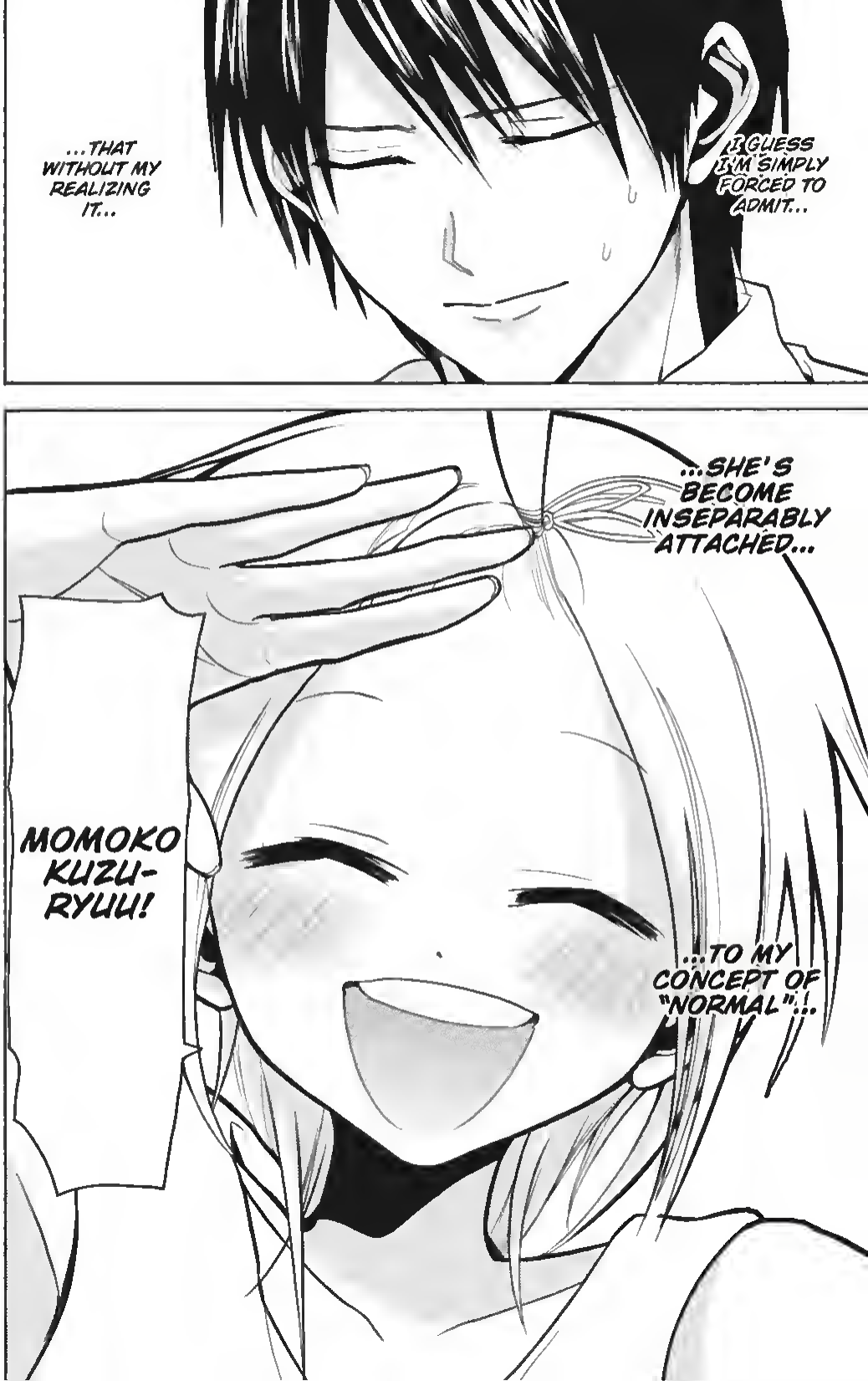
ANGYAAAA (GRAAAHH)
IS IT ONE OF INUZUKA'S...
WH-WHO'S THAT!?
GOOO (VMMM)
ゴォオキ
CHUN (BINK)
チュン
...HENCH—
TA (TMP)
KIRAN (SPARKLE)
GYUN (ZNM)
MO...!
MO...
HAA (WHEEZE)
AHA!
はあ
HAA
I WAS RUNNING AT FULL SPEED FOR TEN HOURS STRAIGHT, SO...
I-I'M SORRY...
...IT TOOK A WHILE TO COME TO A STOP!

MOMOKO!!
IT'S ME!!
IT'S SO GOOD TO SEE YOU ALL!

MOMOKO-SENPAI!
OH, MOMO-KOOOO!
BUT WHY ARE YOU HERE?

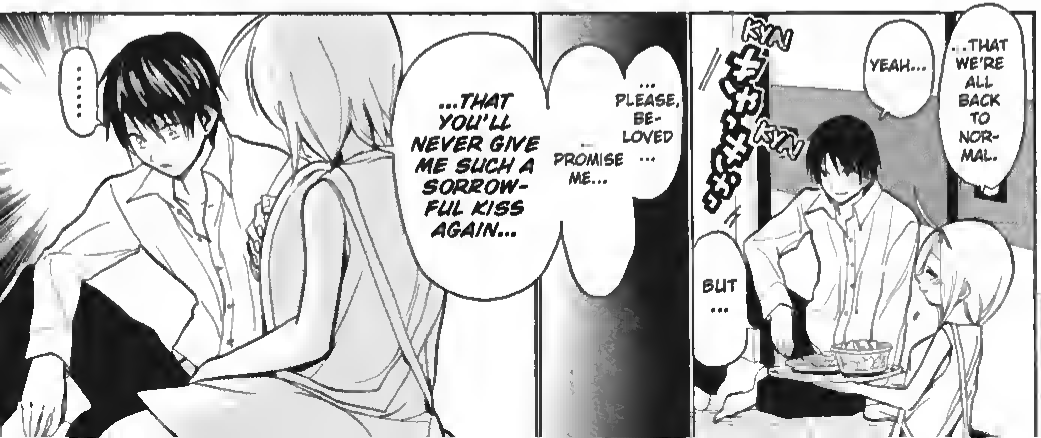
KOUSHI-DONO!
TA (TMP)

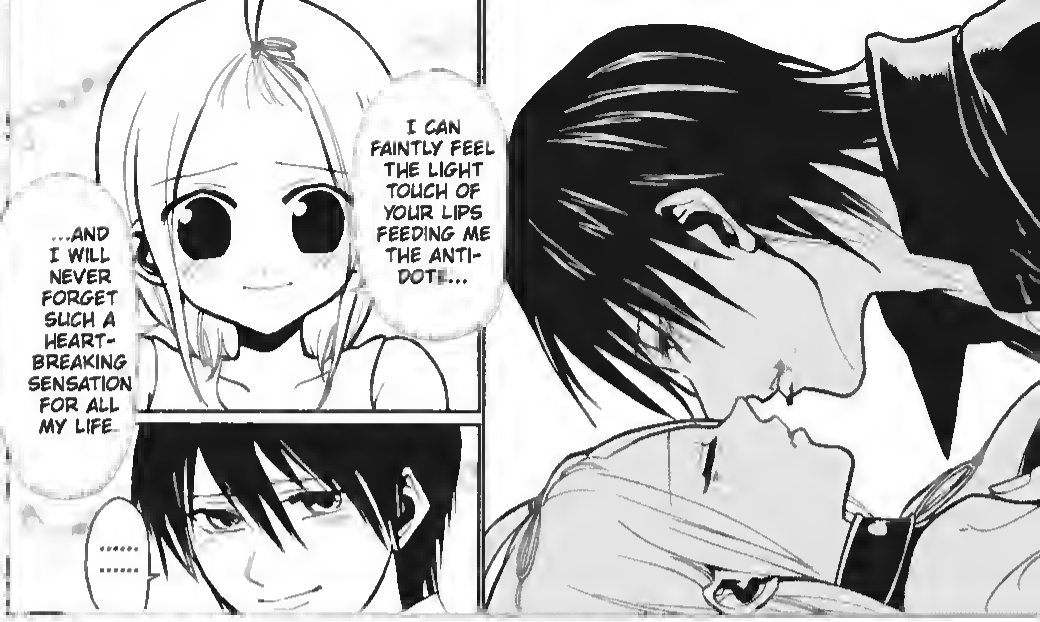
OH, KOUSHI-DONO!
IT BRIGHT-ENS MY HEART!
IT IS SO WONDER-FUL TO SEE YOU IN GOOD HEALTH!
OHH...
ARE YOU EN-TIRELY WELL NOW?
YOU ARE BACK ON YOUR FEET!
...BUT THAT CAN WAIT UNTIL TOMOR-ROW, I'M SURE.
AND I SUPPOSE YOU'LL NEED YOUR CLOTHES WASHED...
LET'S ALSO VISIT THE BATHHOUSE BEFORE IT CLOSES!
I'LL NEED TO GO SHOPPING!
WHAT SOUNDS GOOD TO YOU?
IF NOT, I CAN GET STARTED ON IT RIGHT AWAY.
HAVE YOU EATEN DINNER YET?
NOW IT'S BACK TO NORMAL.
THAT'S IT.
.....
THEN I'LL GO TO SCHOOL ...
...AND STUDY HARD...

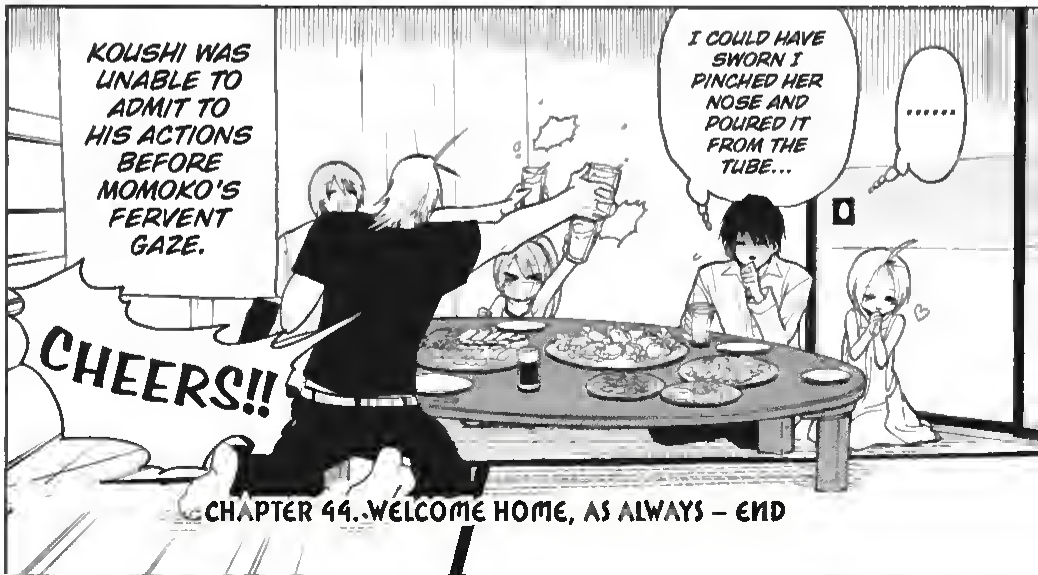

...THAT WITHOUT MY REALIZING IT...
I GUESS I'M SIMPLY FORCED TO ADMIT...
...SHE'S BECOME INSEPARABLY ATTACHED...
MOMOKO KUZU-RYUU!
...TO MY CONCEPT OF "NORMAL"...

IWA CRASHED
IS BACK IN ACTION !!

WELL, I'M VERY GLAD...


...THAT YOU'LL NEVER GIVE ME SUCH A SORROWFUL KISS AGAIN...
...PLEASE, BELOVED ... PROMISE ME...
KYU
...THAT WE'RE ALL BACK TO NORMAL.
YEAH...
BUT ...

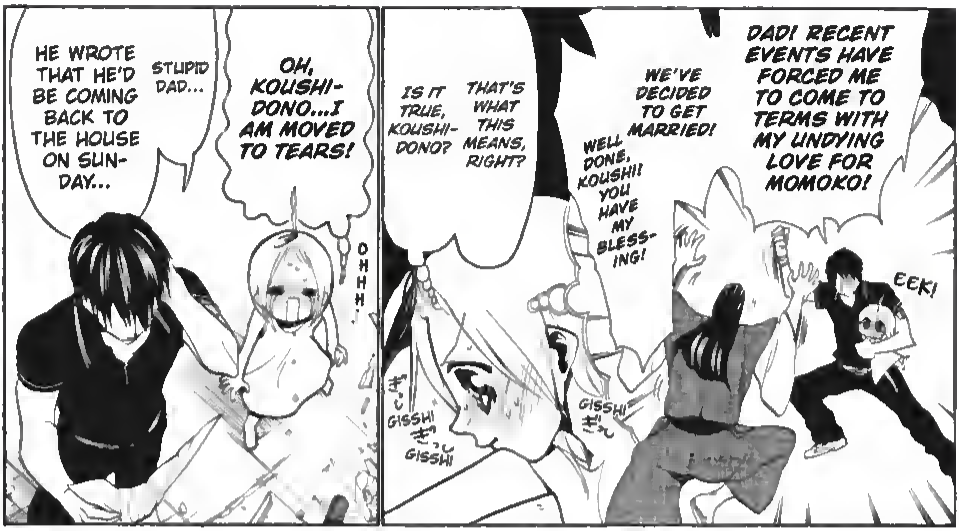

I CAN FAINTLY FEEL THE LIGHT TOUCH OF YOUR LIPS FEEDING ME THE ANTI-DOTE...
...AND I WILL NEVER FORGET SUCH A HEART-BREAKING SENSATION FOR ALL MY LIFE.
.....
.....


KOUSHI WAS UNABLE TO ADMIT TO HIS ACTIONS BEFORE MOMOKO'S FERVENT GAZE.
CHEERS!!
I COULD HAVE SWORN I PINCHED HER NOSE AND POURED IT FROM THE TUBE...
.....

CHAPTER 44..WELCOME HOME, AS ALWAYS – END

SO...
...TIME FOR BED, I THINK.
Y-
YES!
IT FEELS LIKE IT'S BEEN SO LONG...
...SINCE I SPENT THE NIGHT WITH KOUSHI-DONO.
HE HAS JUST RECOV-ERED HIS HEALTH.
HE WILL BE TIRED.
B-BUT...
CHIRA (PEEK)
...I JUST CAN'T SUPPRESS THE JOY THAT SEEKS TO BURST OUT OF ME AT BEING AT KOUSHI-DONO'S SIDE ONCE AGAIN...
AND IS IT JUST MY IMAGINATION... OR IS HE EVEN MORE REGAL AND HANDSOME THAN BEFORE?
TRANSFERRAL OF ELIXIR OR NOT...WE HAVE ALREADY SHARED A PASSIONATE KISS. COULD TONIGHT BE...
DOKI (BADUM)
DOKI DOKI
...THE NIGHT?
HEY.
ZUI (MPH)
AH!
Y-YES!?

45. KOUSHI INUZUKA, AGE 17, MAKES A MAN'S DECISION



ZU
GO
GO
GO
GO
GO
GO
GO (RMBL)
GO
GO
GO
GO
GO
GO
GO

ZUGO (RUMBLE)
ズゴゴ
GO
ゴゴゴゴ
BASSA (FLAP)
ばっさ
BASSA
ばっさ
BASSA
ばっさ
BASSA
WE MEET AGAIN!!
……
I WAS JUST PROCURING SOME WOOD FOR THE REBUILDING...
...IN SIBERIA!
THE TREES OF SIBERIA ARE STRONG
YES, HINKEN. LET'S START!!
VERY WELL!
ズシャーン
ZUSHAAAN
WERE YOU WAITING LONG?
ZUSHAAAN (SHUDD)
ズシャーン
MMM...
……
ズゥン…
BLUIN (VMM)

KA (FLASH)
SIX WORLDS BURNING GAZE!
VUN (VMMM)
FLYING DRAGON ONE-FLASH BLADE!

AND DON'T YOU DARE TURN AROUND AND LOOK AT US!
WE CAN TALK AFTER YOU'RE FINISHED WITH THAT.
BY THE WAY, WITH THE FOUR OF US HERE ...
...SHOW ME YOUR HALE AND HEARTY FACE, FULL OF VIGOR.
JI JI JI (BZT)
BIIII (ZZAP)
I WAS WORRIED FOR YOUR SAKE. YOU DID NOT WAKE.
PLEASE, SON...
BAKIII (CRACK)
ZUPAAN (ZPOWW)

KOUSHI, HOW YOU'VE GROWN! ALL HEALED BY NOW?
UH. YEAH..
MOMOKO! HOW DO YOU FEEL?
PERHAPS NOT SAFE AND SOUND...
...BUT GIVEN THAT THE ENEMY HAD SUNK TO THE USE OF POISON, WELL...
FIRST, I WOULD SAY...
...WELL DONE FOR COMING BACK ALIVE.

BY THE WAY, KOUSHI...
DID YOU HEAR ANYTHING FROM TENGA KOGANEI?
LIKE WHAT?
I GUESS NOT, THEN.
ズーン
UH... IS THIS YOUR... DAD?
YES!
WOW... NO SECRET WHAT HE DOES FOR A LIVING...
LISTEN...
...THIS INCIDENT WITH THE KOGANEIS...
...THIS IS NO MERE CASE OF ASSASSINS RUNNING AMOK.
IT IS TRUE...
...THAT TENGA'S POWER WAS FAR BEYOND ANYTHING I HAD FACED BEFORE.

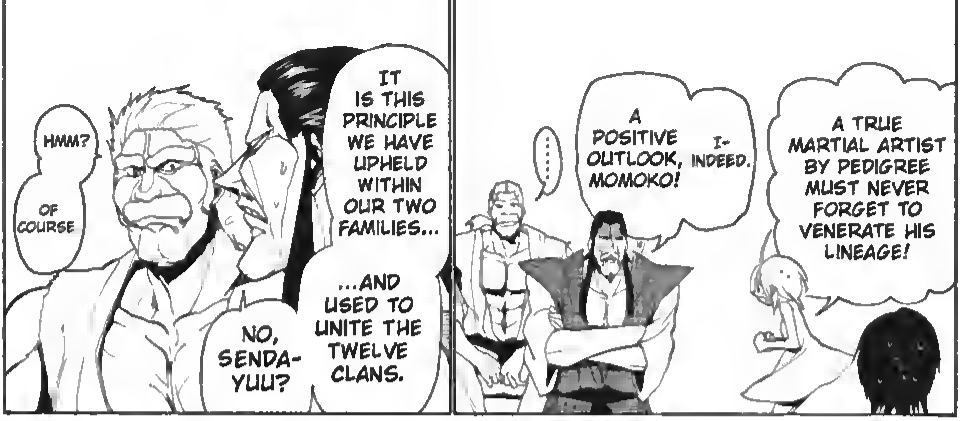
AND THE SOURCE OF TENGA'S ABNORMAL MIGHT IS WHAT WE CALL...
...THE "ANCIENT POWER."
ANCIENT POWER?

INDEED
THIS IS NOT A WIDELY-KNOWN FACT...
...BUT THE MARTIAL ARTISTS OF THE DISTANT PAST...
...WERE FAR STRONGER THAN TODAY'S.
BREEDING WITH ORDINARY HUMANS STEADILY THINNED AND WEAKENED THE BLOOD...
...UNTIL NOW, THE ONLY GIFT WE HAVE OVER OTHERS ...
...IS A SLIGHT ADVANTAGE IN REFLEXES OR THE ADEPT USE OF WEAPONRY.

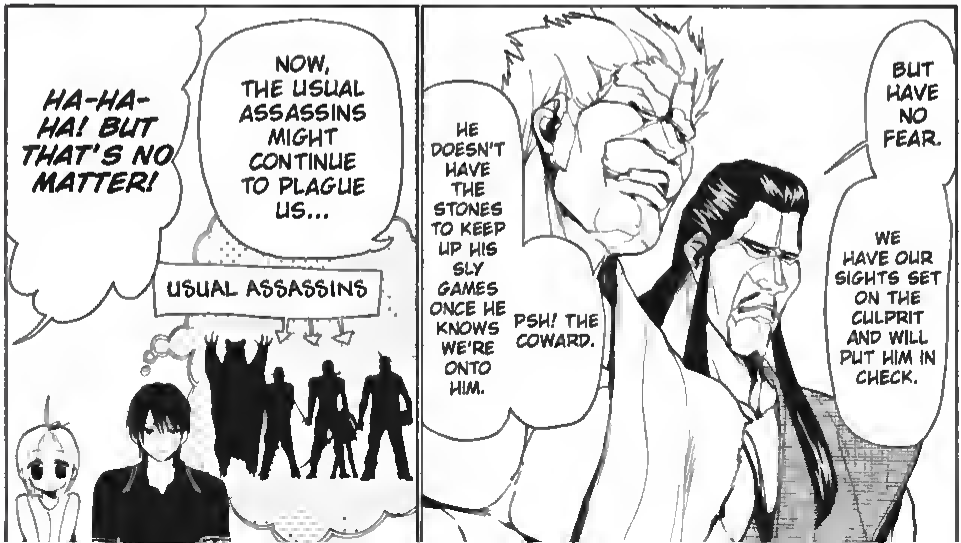
ALL EXCEPT FOR US IN THE KUZURYUU AND INUZUKA CLANS!
WE KEPT OUR NUMBERS SMALL, BUT STAYED CLOSE AND MARRIED ONLY OTHER POWERFUL WARRIORS.
THAT'S WHY WE STILL HAVE SO MUCH OF OUR ANCESTRAL ABILITY!
OUR SUPERHUMAN TALENTS—MANIPULATION OF BATTLE ENERGY AND THE USE OF EYE TECHNIQUES—ARE A PRODUCT OF THE ANCIENT POWER.

YOU SEE, KOUSHI, THAT MEANS YOUR EYE TECHNIQUE TALENT ...
...IS THE PRODUCT OF YOUR ANCESTORS' CAREFUL PLANNING AND HARD WORK.
BE GRATEFUL TO THEM FOR IT!
MY... TALENT?
.....

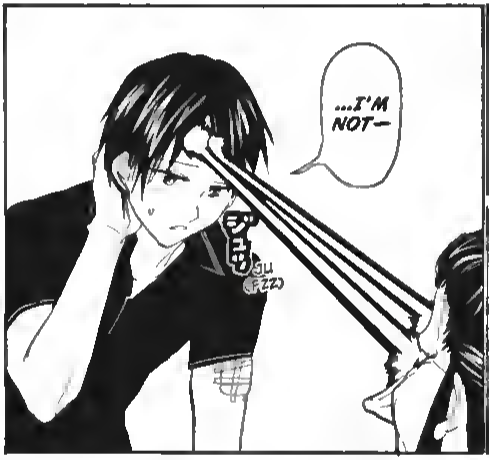
Y—!
YES, OF COURSE!


A TRUE MARTIAL ARTIST BY PEDIGREE MUST NEVER FORGET TO VENERATE HIS LINEAGE!
I-INDEED.
A POSITIVE OUTLOOK, MOMOKO!
IT IS THIS PRINCIPLE WE HAVE UPHELD WITHIN OUR TWO FAMILIES...
...AND USED TO UNITE THE TWELVE CLANS.
NO, SENDA-YUU?
HMM?
OF COURSE

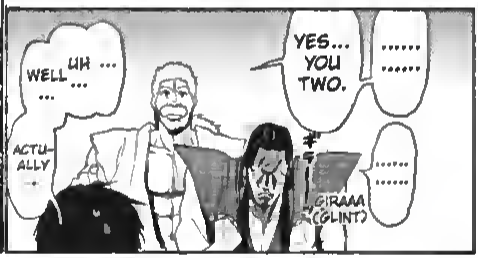
BUT NOW A PROBLEM HAS ARISEN.
SOME EXTREMIST FORCE IS SEEKING TO FAN THE FLAMES OF WAR...
...AND HAS DISCOVERED A WAY TO BRING BACK THE ANCIENT POWER.
AND THUS THEY GRANTED TENGA KOGANEI, A FELLOW EXTREMIST, THIS BOON.
THAT WAS THE CAUSE OF THIS RECENT UPRISING.


BUT HAVE NO FEAR.
WE HAVE OUR SIGHTS SET ON THE CULPRIT AND WILL PUT HIM IN CHECK.
PSH! THE COWARD.
HE DOESN'T HAVE THE STONES TO KEEP UP HIS SLY GAMES ONCE HE KNOWS WE'RE ONTO HIM.
NOW, THE USUAL ASSASSINS MIGHT CONTINUE TO PLAGUE US...
HA-HA-HA! BUT THAT'S NO MATTER!
USUAL ASSASSINS

WE'VE GOT TWO GREAT AND MIGHTY WARRIORS IN YOU TWO!


...I'M NOT—
ジュリ
(FZZ)

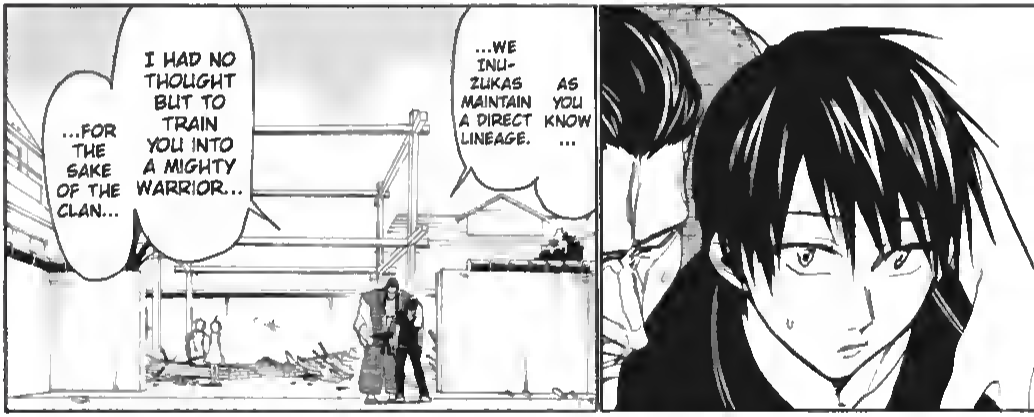
GIKU (TWITCH)
TWO?
RIGHT?
WHO'S AFRAID OF A FEW MEASLY RUNTS ANYMORE!


WELL... UH...
YES... YOU TWO.
.....
.....
ACTU-ALLY
GIRAAA (GLINT)

...THAT WHEN I CAME TO KOGANEI VILLAGE ...

SHUT UP AND LISTEN!
ALL I WANT TO SAY...
IS THIS ANOTHER LECTURE !?
WHAT!
← ALSO WHIS-PERED
WHIS-PERED →
KOUSHI!

...I FELT A CHILL RUN DOWN MY BACK.
...AND I SAW YOU LYING PROSTRATE ON THE GROUND...


...FOR THE SAKE OF THE CLAN...
I HAD NO THOUGHT BUT TO TRAIN YOU INTO A MIGHTY WARRIOR...
...WE INU-ZUKAS MAINTAIN A DIRECT LINEAGE.
AS YOU KNOW ...

...IS MORE LIKELY TO GET YOU KILLED THAN MAKE YOU A MAN...
I NOW REALIZE THAT THRUSTING MY ONLY CHILD INTO DANGER...
...WOULD BUILD YOUR STRENGTH BOTH PHYSI-CALLY AND MENTALLY.
...BECAUSE I HOPED THAT DOING BATTLE AGAINST SUCH ASSAS-SINS...
I LEFT YOU TO FEND FOR YOURSELF AGAINST THE KOGANE! THREAT...
NOW, KOUSHI ...
BUT THE SITUATION IS MUCH WORSE THAN I FEARED.

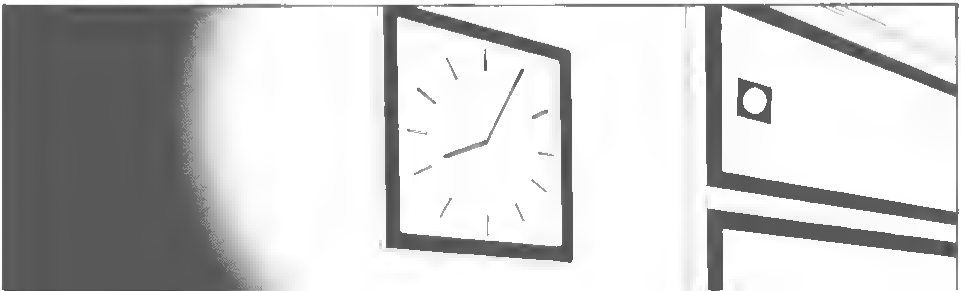
GASHI (GRIP)
!!
HOW-EVER...
I WILL NOT HARASS YOU TO TRAIN ANY LONGER.
...AS YOUR FATHER, I WILL DO MY BEST TO PROTECT YOU.
...THEY WILL COME FOR YOU.
HOWEVER, KOUSHI...
...AND I WILL DIE BEFORE YOU DO!
I WILL PROTECT YOU, BUT I AM YOUR FATHER...
KOUSHI ...
...I NO LONGER SIMPLY WISH FOR YOU TO BE STRONG...!
WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO YOU...
...AFTER YOUR PRO-TECTOR IS GONE?

I JUST WANT YOU TO LIVE!
I CANNOT TELL YOU...
...HOW MUCH I WORRY FOR YOU!!!

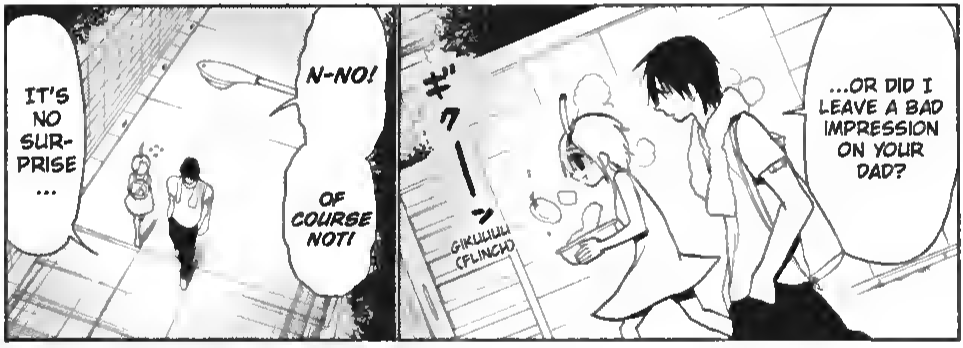
IS HE NOT... GRAND?
LOOK AT HIM NOW!
IT HAS BEEN YEARS SINCE YOU SAW KOUSHI-DONO...
MOMO-KO...
F-FATHER...

IS KOUSHI TRULY A STRONG MAN AFTER ALL?
I'VE NEVER KNOWN ONE WITH SUCH WEAK EYES.
HE CERTAINLY DOESN'T APPEAR TO HAVE ANY AMOUNT OF STRENGTH THAT IS WORTHY OF YOU.
IF IT TURNS OUT THAT MY EXPECTA-TIONS WERE WRONG ...

...I COULD ANNUL THE ENGAGE-MENT FOR YOU.
!!
MOMOKO?
H-HE'S JUST... JUST...
.....
.....
KOUSHI-DONO IS... WELL...



.....
...IS IT JUST ME...
.....


IT'S NO SUR-PRISE ...
N-NO!
OF COURSE NOT!
ギクーッ
GIKUUUU (FLINCH)
...OR DID I LEAVE A BAD IMPRESSION ON YOUR DAD?

.....
AND YOU WERE FIGHTING ALL THE WHILE...
...AND GOT HURT...
...ALL I DID WAS PASS OUT...
BACK AGAINST THE KOGA-NEIS...
I MEAN, HE WANTED US TO HAVE A BABY UNDER THE ASSUMPTION THAT I WAS POWERFUL, RIGHT?

YES?
Y-
HEY.
.....
.....
.....
.....
LMM ...
WELL ...
I WAS GONNA TELL YOU THIS EARLIER TODAY...
??
YES ...??
... BUT I GUESS NOW WILL DO.
I WANT YOU TO LISTEN CLOSE...
.....
.....
LOOK...
.....
...WELL, SINCE WE'VE BEEN AROUND EACH OTHER...
...YOU MAY NOT ACTUALLY REALIZE THIS, BUT...
OKAY... SO YOU KNOW HOW...

...?
...A PROPER AMOUNT...
I FEEL...
WELL...
YES...
WHAT I MEAN IS...
I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'RE ASKING ME
...A COLOSSAL AMOUNT?
NO...A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT...
...SAVED MY ASS A BUNCH OF TIMES?
...YOU'VE, LIKE...
...OF GRATITUDE.
...I FEEL A TON...
...TOWARD YOU...

AND, I MEAN ...
...I JUST CAN'T GO AROUND HAVING OTHER PEOPLE SAVE ME ALL THE TIME.
... WELL ...
AND I REALIZED THAT IF SOMEONE DIES BECAUSE OF THAT...
...IT WOULD REALLY TEAR ME APART.
SO I'VE MADE ...
ZAA (ZSHH)
...A DECI-SION.

I'M GOING TO TAKE THIS MARTIAL ARTS STUFF SERIOUSLY.
I'll WORK WITH MY DAD WHEN THE HOUSE IS DONE BEING BUILT.
I DON'T WANT TO GIVE UP ON BEING A PROSECUTOR, BUT I WANT TO BE ABLE...
...TO PROTECT MY LIFE AND MY DREAM...
...AT THE SAME TIME.
.....
A MAN WITH SUCH WEAK EYES...

NO.

HE HAS A VAST INNER STRENGTH THAT HE CALLS UPON...
...TO PUT HIM BACK ON HIS FEET!
MY MIND IS MADE UP...!

KOUSHI-DONO IS A GREAT AND MIGHTY MAN!
FATHER...

BUT...
BUT...!
...THAT HE IS UNDER STRESS THAT SAPS HIS CONFIDENCE NOW...
IT MAY BE TRUE ...

I WILL STAY BY KOUSHI-DONO'S SIDE!
I KNEW IT, FATHER...HE IS AS SUPERB AND WONDERFUL A MAN AS THERE EVER COULD BE!!
I-IF YOU WERE CONCERNED WITH FATHER'S OPINION, DOES THAT MEAN...
OH!!
...YOU WERE THINKING ABOUT YOUR MAR...
... RIAGE WITH ME!?
PURU
PURU
PURU
PURU (SHIVER)
PURU
HUH!?
NO, NO, NOT THAT...
... HMM ...?
WELL, UHH ULTI- ... MATELY, MAYBE IT'S RELATED.
I GUESS

...I'LL GIVE IT SOME CONSIDER-ATION.
!!
PURU
I'M NOT SAYING IT'LL BE POSITIVE CONSID-ERATION!
BUT SINCE IT HAS A CONNECTION TO THE MARTIAL ARTS PART ...
...IT COULD BE A WAY FOR ME TO MAKE ALL THIS UP TO YOU!
YEAH?
AAAHH!
GASHAAN (CLATTER)
GOUJI-DODOOO !!!
DU (DOOSH)
OH, KOUSHI-DONO! WE HAVE ALREADY SHARED A LOVING KISS, EVEN THOUGH WE ARE NOT YET WED!
SURELY THERE IS NO NEED TO BE SHY ANY LONGER!
UH, ABOUT THAT!
YEAH ...
MOJI
FIDGET
BUCHU (SMOOCH)
SEE...
KOUSHI ...
...HAD JUST DECIDED ON TAKING HIS FIRST STEP AS A MARTIAL ARTIST.

.....

...AFTER A DREADFUL BATTLE TO SAVE HIS LIFE...
MEAN-WHILE ...

GYU (SQUEEZE)
むぎゅー

.....

...THE GIRLS REA- FIRMED ...
...THEIR FEELINGS FOR KOUSHI...

ぎゅっ GYU

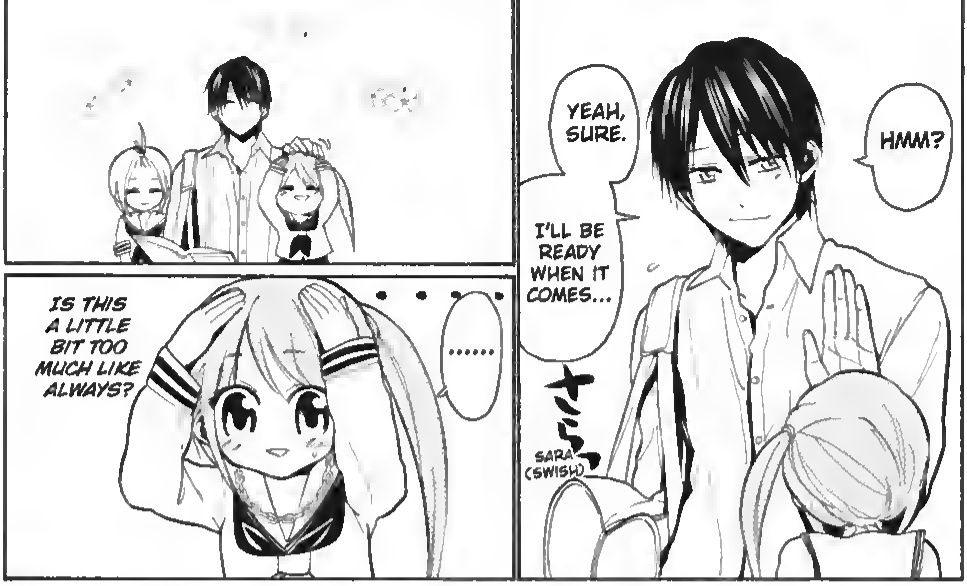
...THE SOLEMN OATH OF LOVE AND SERVICE TO A SINGLE MAN!!
...AND PLEDGED DEEP WITHIN THEIR HEARTS...
SFX: DABABABA (GLUG)
ダバババ
LOOK, IT'S NOT MY FAULT YOU GOT THE WRONG IDEA.
DON'T TAKE IT OUT ON ME!
C'MON ...
ABOUT TO BREAK

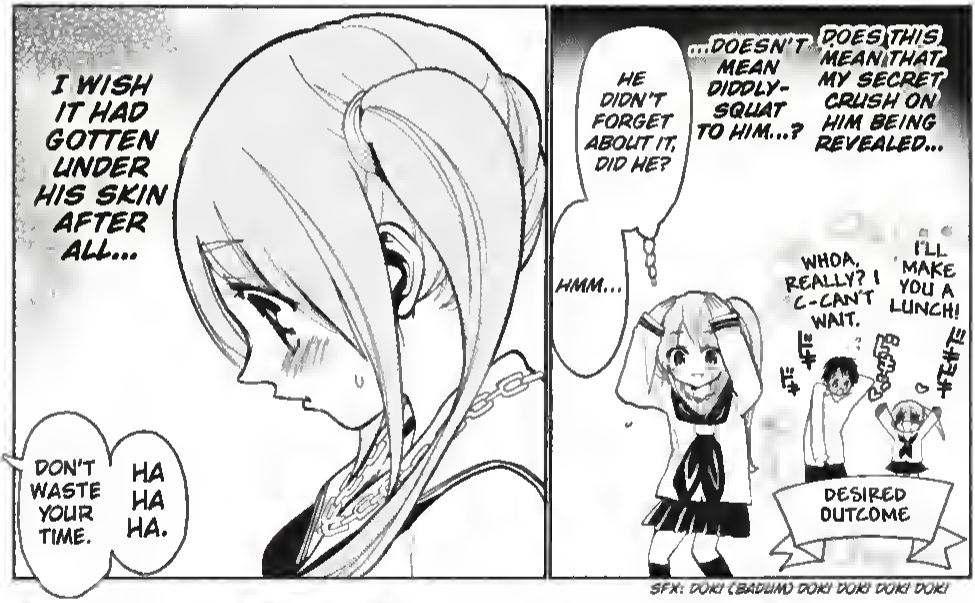
CHAPTER 45. KOUSHI INUZUKA, AGE 17, MAKES A MAN'S DECISION – END

46. IROHA VS. CLASS REP

チュン
チュン
CHUN
CHUN (TWEET)
IT'S MORNING!
C'MON, SLEEPY-HEAD!
GET UP, HANZOU!
BAFU
ばふっ
BAFU (BWOMP)
ばふぁ
BAFU
NGAK!
PAN (POP)
パン
BIKU (TWITCH)
ビクッ
HA-HA-HA! SHOULDN'T THAT BE OBVIOUS...?
WHY ARE YOU SO EXCITED ...?
Y-
YOU'RE UP EARLY, NEE-SAN...
IT'S 6 A.M....
AHA!
I MEAN...
I MEAN...

WE CAN ALL GO TO SCHOOL AGAIN TOMORROW!
MOMOKO-SENPAI IS BACK!
GOOD MORNING!
...AND STILL TREATS ME THE SAME AS ALWAYS!
...WAS KIND ENOUGH TO IGNORE IT...
CAN I MAKE YOU A LUNCH FOR TOMORROW?
UH, KOUSHI-SENPAI!
KOUSHI-ONII-CHAN TOO...
...BUT MOMOKO-SENPAI UNDER-STOOD AND FORGAVE ME...
WHEN TENTEN KOGANEI SPILLED MY SECRET CRUSH FOR EVERYONE TO HEAR, I THOUGHT IT WAS THE END...
AND THEN WHEN YOU EAT IT...
...YOU CAN TELL US WHICH ONE IS BETTER!
I'LL BACK THEM UP!
HA-HA. THOSE ARE BOLD WORDS.
ONE JUST AS GOOD AS MOMOKO-SENPAI'S!




I WISH IT HAD GOTTEN UNDER HIS SKIN AFTER ALL...
HA HA HA.
DON'T WASTE YOUR TIME.
HMM...
HE DIDN'T FORGET ABOUT IT, DID HE?
...DOESN'T MEAN DIDDLY-SQUAT TO HIM...?
DOES THIS MEAN THAT MY SECRET CRUSH ON HIM BEING REVEALED...
WHOA, REALLY? I C-CAN'T WAIT.
I'LL MAKE YOU A LUNCH!
DESIRED OUTCOME

SFX: DOKI (BADUMP) DOKI DOKI DOKI DOKI

HER BOOBS AND BUTT ARE BARELY ACORN-LEVEL AT BEST!
GA
GA (SNAP)
TRUE, SHE MIGHT BE SMALL...IN ALL FORMS OF THE WORD!
BUT LOOKING AT MOMOKO-CHAN...
WHAT!? TAKE THAT BACK, YOU CAD!!
MOMOKO'S AT LEAST A HUNDRED TIMES THE WOMAN YOU ARE.
YOU'RE BARELY WORTH LOOKING AT, IF YOU ASK ME.
GUA (CRAWR)
KACHIN (KACHING)

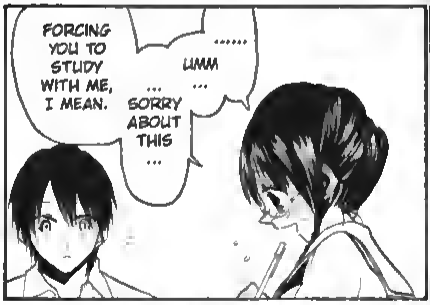
SURA (STRETCH)
フフ…
FUWA (SWISH)
ACORN (1)
ACORN (2)
…I CAN BE FEMININE ENOUGH FOR HIM TOO!
BUT…
TRUE, MOMOKO-SENPAI MIGHT BE A FORMIDABLE RIVAL IN THE ARENA OF LOVE…
I CAN BE SEXY!
I CAN BE WOMANLY …

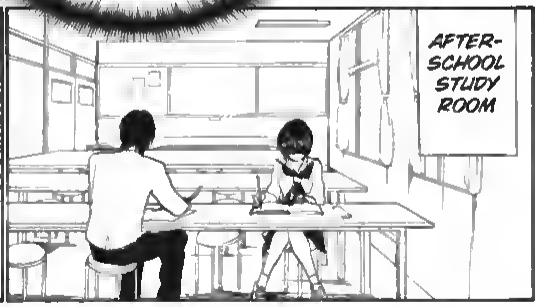
OH…
GO (DM) GO GO …
MUCHI (MMPH)
G–
GOOD MORNING …
…INUZUKA-KUN…
…AND EVERY-ONE ELSE!
GO
PURUN (JIGGLE)

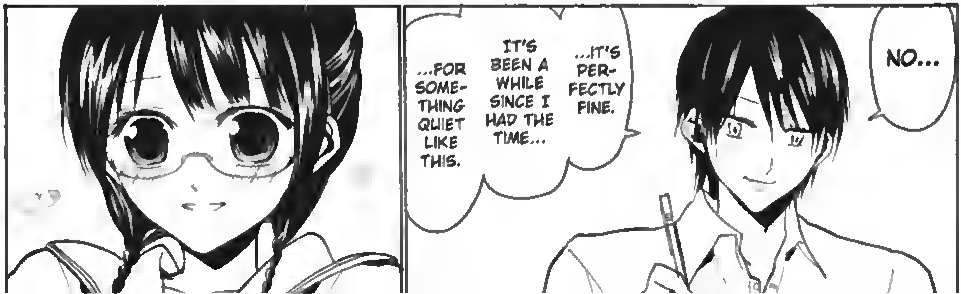
IT...
IT'S SO GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN!
SHARAAAN (SPARKLE)
KIRA (SPRINKLE)
KIRA
WHOA...
OH NO...
SHH! SHH!
YO!
I FORGOT ABOUT THIS SNAKE IN THE GRASS!!
DON'T WORRY, I WON'T TELL.
HISO (WHISPER)

...BUT I'LL BE DAMNED IF I LET A SNEAK THIEF LIKE YOU TIPTOE IN AND TAKE HIM AWAY FROM ME!
MOMOKO-SENPAI IS ONE THING...
THAT FOUR-EYES!!
ゴゴゴゴ
GOGOGOGO (RRRUMBLE)

I'LL NEVER LET THAT HAPPEN!!


FORCING YOU TO STUDY WITH ME, I MEAN.
... SORRY ABOUT THIS ...
UMM ...
.....


AFTER-SCHOOL STUDY ROOM


NO...
...IT'S PERFECTLY FINE.
IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE I HAD THE TIME...
...FOR SOMETHING QUIET LIKE THIS.

INUZUKA-KUN...
LISTEN TO ME, SANAE.
YOU'LL BE BACK TO PROTECTING KOUSHI-DONO IN SECRET TODAY.
JUST KEEP IN MIND...
...NOT TO FOSTER ANY SPECIAL FEELINGS TOWARD HIM.
FORGET ABOUT IT.
IT'LL ONLY CAUSE YOU PAIN IN THE END.
.....
NO, GRANDMA.
I THINK ...
... GIVING UP ON HIM ...
... WOULD BE THE MOST PAINFUL THING OF ALL.
I WILL CONTINUE MY TRAINING!
I WILL FULFILL MY DUTY!
I WILL KEEP MY SECRET!
BUT...
...THAT DOESN'T MEAN...
...I'LL DECIDE NOT TO LOVE INUZUKA-KUN ANYMORE.
DOKI (BADUM)
DOKI
DOKI
.....
INU-ZUKA-KUN...
YEAH?
I DECIDED ...
... THAT, WELL ...
SU (SHH)
...IF YOU DON'T MIND...

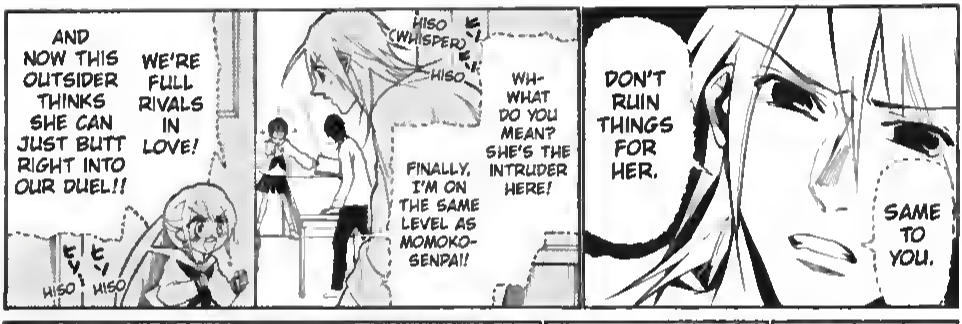
...I'D LIKE TO TELL YOU—
BYUON (ZWOOSH)
SA (ZZP)
PAKYA (PKOWW)
NO, WAIT...
THERE'S TOO MUCH HATRED IN THAT AURA...
GO
GO (DM)
HA (GASP)
WH...
WHA...?
!?
?
PAPER CLIP
SHUUU (HSSS)
ANOTHER ASSASSIN!?

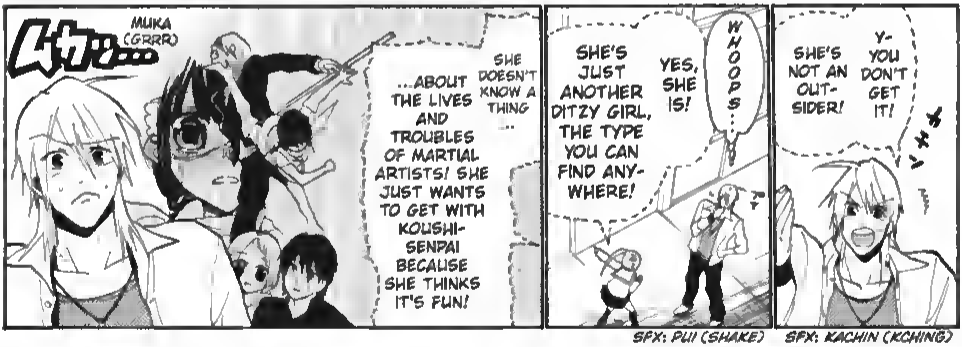
EEEEK!
AAAAHHHH!
I SHOULD HAVE FIGURED IT WOULD BE HER!!
NGO (RUMBLE)
GO

SUUU (SHH)
Y-YOU THINK SO?
YOU MUST HAVE IMAGINED IT!
OR DID SOMETHING FLY ACROSS THE ROOM?
IS IT ME
!?
SA (ZIP)

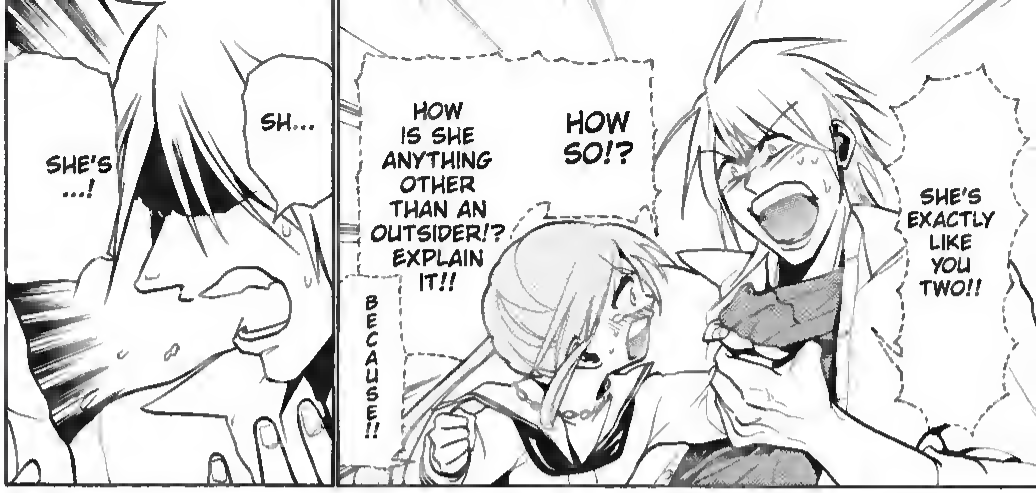
GA (SNAG)
SFX: HYU (ZIP)
TAKE THIS!
!?
WHA—!?
WHAT DO YOU WANT!?
MOMOKO ON CLEANING DUTY
BUT THERE'S A PRICE FOR THE CRIME OF SNEAKING UNDER MOMOKO-SENPAI'S NOSE...
AND YOU NEED TO PAY UP!
DON'T WORRY.
I WOULDN'T BRING OUT THE BIG GUNS AGAINST A NORMAL PERSON.

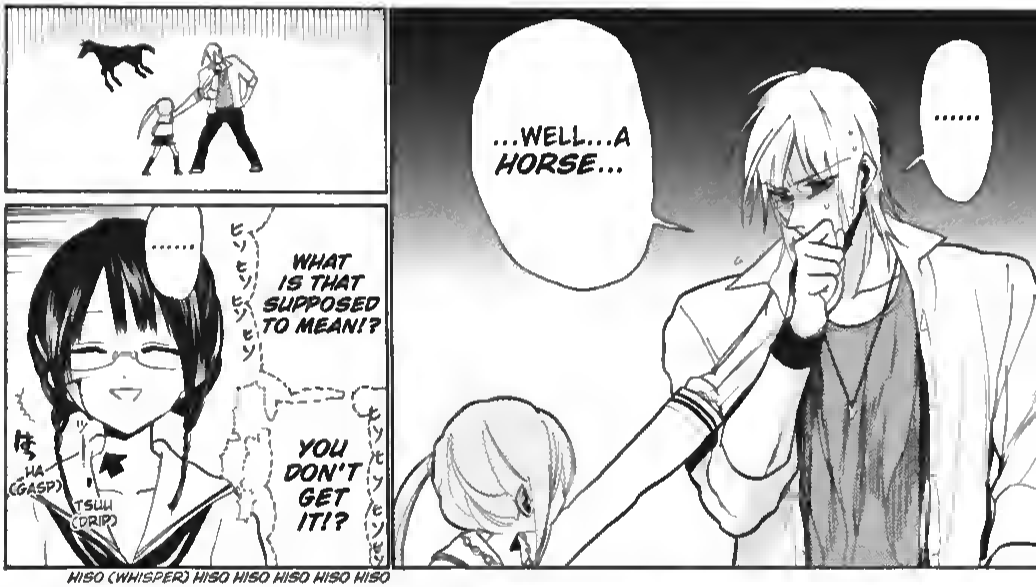
TENKA!
DON'T RUIN THINGS FOR ME!
GU (TUG)


AND NOW THIS OUTSIDER THINKS SHE CAN JUST BUTT RIGHT INTO OUR DUEL!!
WE'RE FULL RIVALS IN LOVE!
HISO HISO
HISO (WHISPER) HISO
WH-WHAT DO YOU MEAN? SHE'S THE INTRUDER HERE!
FINALLY, I'M ON THE SAME LEVEL AS MOMOKO-SENPAI!
DON'T RUIN THINGS FOR HER.
SAME TO YOU.


MUKA (GRRR)
...ABOUT THE LIVES AND TROUBLES OF MARTIAL ARTISTS! SHE JUST WANTS TO GET WITH KOUSHI-SENPAI BECAUSE SHE THINKS IT'S FUN!
SHE DOESN'T KNOW A THING ...
SHE'S JUST ANOTHER DITZY GIRL, THE TYPE YOU CAN FIND ANY-WHERE!
YES, SHE IS!
WHOOPS...
SHE'S NOT AN OUT-SIDER!
Y-YOU DON'T GET IT!
SPX: PUI (SHAKE)
SPX: KACHIN (KCHING)

IRRAAAA
IRA IRA IRA (IRK)
SHE'S NOT LIKE ME OR MOMOKO-SENPAI! SHE DIDN'T FIGHT AND RISK HER LIFE FOR HIM!


SH...
SHE'S ...!
HOW SO!?
HOW IS SHE ANYTHING OTHER THAN AN OUTSIDER!? EXPLAIN IT!!
BECAUSE!!
SHE'S EXACTLY LIKE YOU TWO!!


.....
...WELL...A HORSE...
.....
WHAT IS THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN!?
HISO HISO HISO
YOU DON'T GET IT!?
HA (GASP)
TSUU (DRIP)
HISO (WHISPER) HISO HISO HISO HISO HISO

I'M ALL RIGHT!
JUST FEELING A BIT... ANEMIC...
SO. (SHW)
OH?
CLASS REP...
I WON'T LET THEM GET ME DOWN!
I LOVE INUZUKA-KUN...
...AND NO ASSASSIN OR RIVAL IS GOING TO CHANGE MY MIND!

...THERE'S NO USE FORCING YOURSELF TO DO IT, RIGHT?
...BUT IF YOU'RE TOO TIRED...
I'D REALLY LIKE TO STUDY WITH YOU...
INUZUKA-KUN...
Y-YEAH...
...BEING WITH YOU BRINGS JOY INTO MY LIFE.
OH!
Y-YEAH
SO, YOU WERE SAY-ING?
...I WANT YOU TO BE HAPPY.
I WANT YOU TO LIVE THIS PEACEFUL LIFE...
AND MORE THAN ANY-THING...
...SMILING AND LAUGHING...
THAT'S ALL!
UM, WELL...
I'M...
I HAVE TO TELL HIM.
I'M...
I'M—!!
I'LL TELL YOU!!! SHE'S...
I NEED TO SAY THIS!

...THE HEAVENLY WARRIOR, THE HORSE GIRL!! THE ONE WHO GETS STRONGER THE MORE CLOTHES SHE TAKES OFF!!!!

GI...GI...GI... (CREEEEAK)
?
PISHI (CRACK)

???

SIGH...
THE ONLY GOOD THING IS THAT INUZUKA-KUN DIDN'T FIGURE OUT THE ENTIRE STORY!
I WAS JUST TALKING ABOUT THE PERSON FROM THE LAST BATTLE! THAT'S ALL!
C'MON, LET'S JUST GO! WAIT FOR US AT THE GATE, INUZUKA!
"SHE"?
STILL HAS NO CLUE
HOW COULD YOU REVEAL MY SECRET!?
OH, YOU AWFUL, AWFUL MAN!
HIIIN (WAHHH)
THAT PERVERTED HORSE WOMAN WAS YOU ALL ALONG?
JUST CRAZY...
FIGURED IT OUT
AND SHE WAS CALLING YOU AN "OUTSIDER"!
...JUST LIKE IROHA!
YOU FOUGHT AND GOT HURT FOR HIS SAKE...
.....!
DOESN'T IT FRUSTRATE THE HELL OUT OF YOU? YOU'RE RISKING YOUR LIFE FOR HIM, AND HE DOESN'T EVEN KNOW ABOUT IT!
JUST CUT ME SOME SLACK!
WA (RAWR)

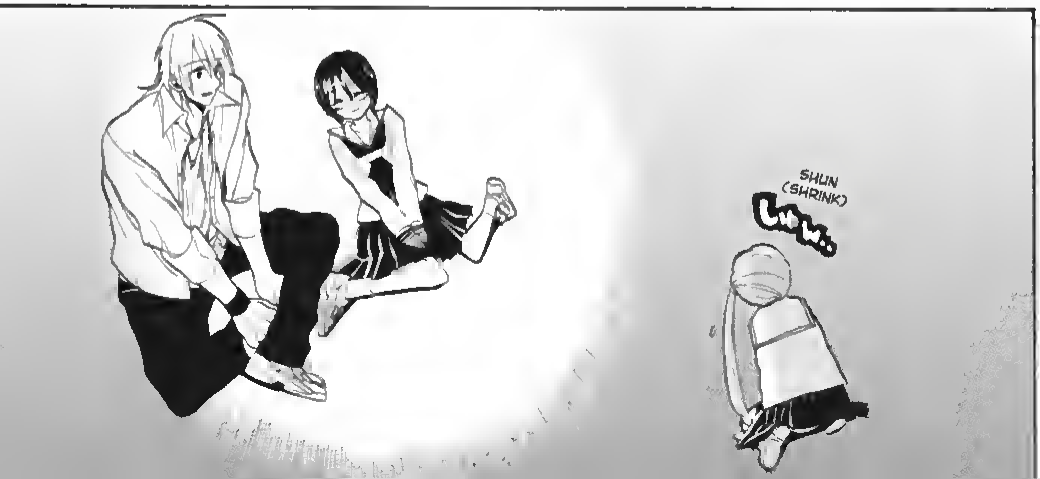
I CAN'T TELL ANYONE... IT'S MY FAMILY'S RULE.
ESPECIALLY NOT TO INUZUKA-KUN.
OUR CLAN ALWAYS PROTECTS THE INUZUKAS IN SECRET.
WE NEVER REVEAL OURSELVES.
HMPH!
IT'S YOUR FAULT FOR HIDING YOUR IDENTITY!
A MARTIAL ARTIST SHOULD ALWAYS ANNOUNCE HERSELF PROUDLY!
WHO CARES IF YOUR OUTFIT IS EMBARRASSING?
N-NO, THAT'S NOT IT!
(WELL, A BIT)

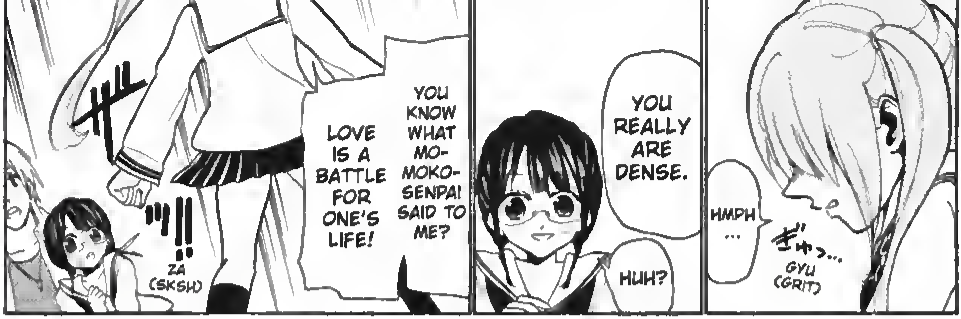
BUT YOU WERE JUST ABOUT TO BREAK THAT LAW AND TELL HIM YOU LIKED HIM, RIGHT?
WH-WHAT? NO!
I WISH I COULD... BUT NOT NOW!
EXACTLY...
BUT NOT "NOW"?
YOU "WISH" YOU COULD?
.....
AND WE'RE ALSO NOT ALLOWED TO HAVE ANY ROMANTIC FEELINGS TOWARD THEM.
MY TEACHER FORBID ME FROM DOING THAT.

...ALL I WANTED TO DO WAS TO LET HIM KNOW...
..."I'M GLAD YOU'RE BACK."
"WELCOME HOME."
INU-ZUKA-KUN...
... HAS REALLY BEEN THROUGH A LOT LATELY.
I THINK LOVE IS PROBABLY THE FURTHEST THING FROM HIS MIND RIGHT NOW.
SO...

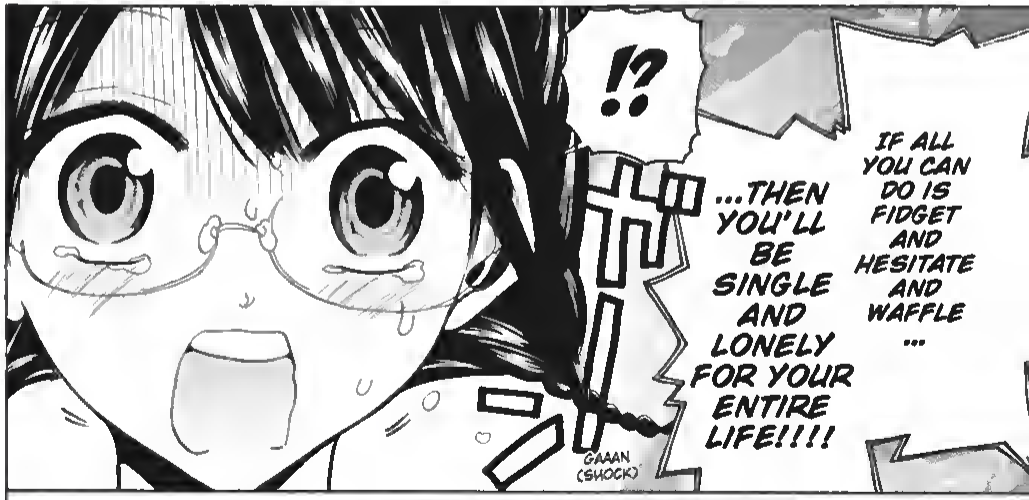
YOU CAN COMPARE OUR LUNCHES!
HE DOESN'T CARE ABOUT ME, BUT I WISH HE WOULD...
IF I START BEING SELFISH AND TRYING TO MAKE HIM PAY ATTENTION TO ME...
I FIGURED THAT WOULD HELP RELAX HIM THE MOST.
...YOU KNOW, NORMAL STUFF.
...WE COULD TALK ABOUT CLASSES...
AFTER THAT...
...SINCE WE'VE DONE THIS!
IT'S BEEN A WHILE...

IF I TRIED TO FORCE HIM INTO THAT...
...I'D JUST BE A BURDEN ON HIM.
.....


SHUN (SHRINK)
Low.


ZA (SKSH)
!!
LOVE IS A BATTLE FOR ONE'S LIFE!
YOU KNOW WHAT MO-MOKO-SENPAI SAID TO ME?
HUH?
YOU REALLY ARE DENSE.
HMPH...
GYU (GRIT)

IF THAT'S THE MOST YOU CAN CARE ABOUT THIS...
THERE'S NO PAUSING IN THE MIDST OF A BATTLE!!


!?
GAAAN (SHOCK)
...THEN YOU'LL BE SINGLE AND LONELY FOR YOUR ENTIRE LIFE!!!!
IF ALL YOU CAN DO IS FIDGET AND HESITATE AND WAFFLE ...

MAN, THAT WAS HARSH.
GAKU (SHIVER)
GAKU?
GAKU
N-NO...!

GOOD IDEA!
WHY DON'T WE SAVE ON GROCERIES BY EATING TOGETHER?
I'M WORRIED ABOUT MY SAVINGS TOO...
...ON SQUEEZING THIS MONTH'S BUDGET FOR ALL IT'S WORTH.
NEED TO WORK HARDER ...
OKAY, I'M READY!
BOOO (DAZE)
SMILEY MART
BARGAIN SALE!!
MAN, THIS IS HARSH.

THEN YOU CAN BRING THE LAUNDRY INSIDE!
PLEASE HURRY HOME NOW!
IT'S GOING TO RAIN THIS EVENING!
KOUSHI-DONO!
DA (DASH)
C'MON, THIS SALE ENDS SOON! GOTTA HURRY!
BAG-CARRIER

IROHA-CHAN?

WELL, YOU HEARD HER.
POSU (PLOP)

.....
.....
SHALL WE GO HOME?

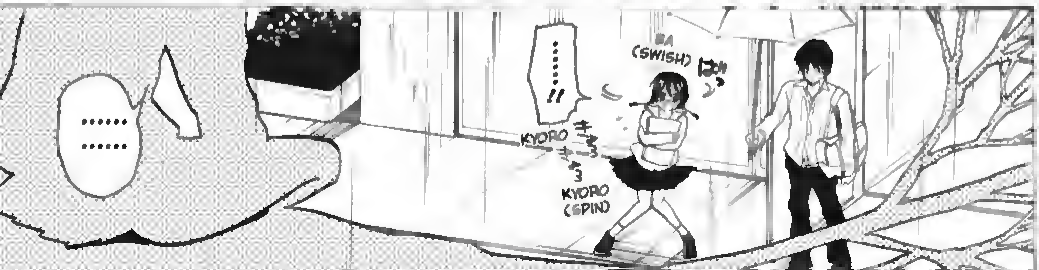
POTSU (DRIP)
POTSU
SAAAAA (FSHHHH)
MAYBE ...
"IF ALL YOU DO IS HESITATE, YOU'LL BE SINGLE ALL YOUR LIFE."

ZAAAAAA
(FSHHHHH)

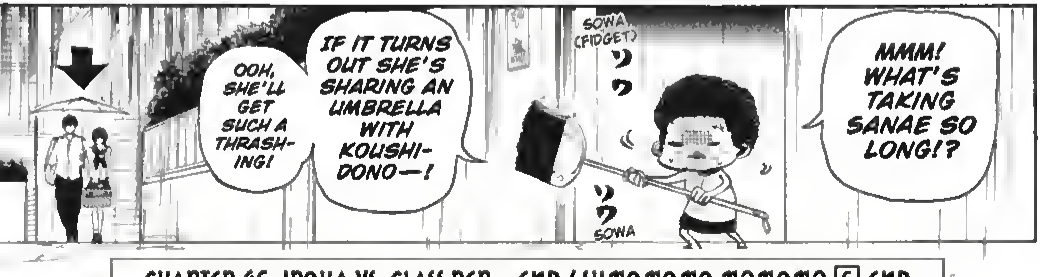
UMM ...
WELL ...
ZAAAAA

AT LEAST ...
...I HEARD YOU WERE STILL HERE AND NOT FEELING WELL.
BUT ...
...EVERY-ONE ELSE LEFT TO DO STUFF.

...THAT'S WHAT IROHA-CHAN SAID.


.....
.....
!!
KYORO
KYORO
KYORO
(SPIN)
(SWISH)

GAHHH...
DAMMIT...
ZAAAAA (FSHHHH)
UZU (ITCH)
UZU
UZU
UZU
THIS IS THE ONLY TIME I'LL LET YOU WIN!
IT'S THE ONLY DAY YOU GET HIM!
.....
AND IT'S ONLY BECAUSE I NOW UNDER-STAND...
...THAT BEING "WITH" SOMEONE MEANS UNDER-STANDING HIS FEELINGS.


OOH, SHE'LL GET SUCH A THRASHING!
IF IT TURNS OUT SHE'S SHARING AN UMBRELLA WITH KOUSHI-DONO—!
SONA (FIDGET)
SONA
MMM! WHAT'S TAKING SANAE SO LONG!?

CHAPTER 46. IROHA VS. CLASS REP – END / SUMOMOMO MOMOMO 6 END

SUMOMOMO, MOMOMO ~THE STRONGEST (?) OMAKE ON EARTH~

SFX: SHUBABABABA (SHWAP WHAP)
I'LL GET STARTED ON IT RIGHT AWAY.
HA HA! NOW, NOW!
LET'S TRAIN, DADDY!
TEACH US A KILLER MOVE!
BAK! (CRAKK) AI BAK!
CHUDOON (CHABOOM)
DO THAT THING, DADDY! SHOOT LASERS FROM YOUR EYES!
WHOAA! COOL!
DADDY'S THE TOUGHEST OF ALL!
I TOLD YOU NOT TO CALL ME THAT IN FRONT OF THE KIDS.
COME ON, MOMOKO.
WHOOPS! JUST AN OLD HABIT. ♡
YOU'LL BE WANTING BOAR FOR LUNCH?
WELCOME HOME, DADDY!
DADDY!
ZUSHAAN (THWUMP)
DADDY!
AND WORST OF ALL...
I WAS SURE I'D NEVER USE MARTIAL ARTS.
I USED TO BE AN IDIOT.
HEE HEE!
HE WASN'T ALWAYS STRONG, THOUGH.
HEY, DON'T BRING THAT UP.
I WANT TO MARRY SOMEONE STRONG LIKE YOU WHEN I GROW UP, DADDY!

OH, HONEY...
...I WAS LIVING WITH THIS ADORABLE WIFE THE WHOLE TIME...
...AND I JUST REFUSED TO GIVE IN TO MY NATURAL URGES!
SHOULD WE GET STARTED...
...ON NUMBER EIGH-TEEN?
AAAAHH!!!
GABA (CLUTCH)
BUT IT WAS A DREAM.
END

TRANSLATION NOTES

Sumomomo, Momomo is part of a well-known Japanese tongue twister which reads, "Sumomo *mo momo mo momo no uchi*," and roughly means, "Plums and peaches are part of the peach family."

Common Honorifics

No honorific: Indicates familiarity or closeness. If used without permission or reason, addressing someone in this manner would be an insult.

-san: The Japanese equivalent of Mr./Mrs./Miss. If a situation calls for politeness, this is the fail-safe honorific.

-sama: Conveys great respect; may also indicate that the social status of the speaker is lower than that of the addressee.

-dono: A polite, formal honorific suffix.

-kun: Used most often when referring to boys, this indicates affection or familiarity. Occasionally used by older men among their peers, but it may also be used by anyone referring to a person of lower standing.

-chan: An affectionate honorific indicating familiarity used mostly in reference to girls; also used in reference to cute persons or animals of either gender.

-sensei: A respectful term for teachers, artists, or high-level professionals.

-nii, onii-san, nii-chan, oniki: Used to address one's older brother or brother figure.

-nee, onee-san, nee-chan, oneki: Used to address ones's older sister or sister figure.

SUMOMOMO MOMOMO⑥

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This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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